
R


600057128T



COLONEL FOUGAS' MISTAKE.

A Novel,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

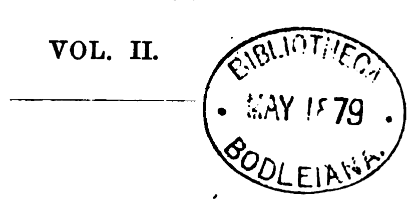
BY

EDMOND ABOUT.

TRANSLATED BY

J. E. MAITLAND.

VOL. II.



London:
REMINGTON AND CO.,
5, ARUNDEL STREET, STRAND, W.C.

1878.



COLONEL FOUGAS.

CHAPTER I.

THE GAME OF LOVE AND WAR.

As she hesitated visibly, about allowing herself to fall into his arms, Fougas, imitating Mahomet, came to the mountain.

"Oh, Clementina," said he, covering her with kisses, "once more the kindly Fates restore you to my affection! I find again

the companion of my life, and the mother of my child!"

The astonished young girl never even thought of defending herself. Fortunately Léon tore her from the Colonel's embrace, and interposed himself as a man bent upon claiming his own property.

"Sir," cried he, clenching his fists, "you are making a tremendous mistake if you think you know mademoiselle. She does not belong to your generation, but to ours. She is not your betrothed, but mine; she never was the mother of your child, and I have every reason to hope she may be the mother of mine."

Fougas was made of iron. He seized his rival by the arm, made him spin round like a top, and again placed himself before the young girl.

"Are you Clementina?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You are all witness that she is my Clementina."

Léon returned to the charge, and caught the Colonel by the collar of his coat, at the risk of being dashed against the wall.

"Enough of this farce," cried he. "You don't surely intend to lay claim to every Clementina in the world? This young lady is called Clementina Sambuco. She was born at Martinique, where you have never set foot, if one may believe the tale you told just now. She is eighteen."

"And the other one, too."

"The other one! Why, she must be at least sixty-four by this time; in 1813 she was eighteen! Mdlle. Sambuco comes of a respectable and well-known family. Her

father, M. Sambuco, was a magistrate; her grandfather belonged to the War Office. You see she is in no way connected with you, and common sense and politeness—to say nothing of gratitude—should prompt you to leave her in peace."

He pushed away the Colonel in his turn, and made him fall into an arm-chair.

Fougas rebounded, as if he had fallen on a thousand springs, but Clementina stopped him with a smiling gesture.

"Sir," she said, in her most caressing tones, "don't be angry with Léon; he loves me."

"All the more reason, by Jove!"

Nevertheless he calmed himself, made the young girl sit down by him, and gazed at her with the greatest attention.

"It is really she!" he exclaimed. "My memory, my eyes, my heart, everything within me recognises her, and tells me it is she! And yet the testimony of these men, the time that has elapsed, the difference of locality, in a word, evidence itself seems to take me to task and convict me of error. Can two women really resemble each other so exactly? Am I the victim of a mental delusion? Have I only recovered my life to lose my senses? No! I recognise myself; I am what I was before; my clear and steadfast judgment guides me without trouble or hesitation in this world, new and disorganised as I find it. There is only one point on which my reason wavers. Clementina, I seem to see thee again, and yet thou art not thyself!

Well, no matter, after all! If the hand of destiny which has snatched me from the tomb, presents me on my awakening with the *fac-simile* of her I loved, it is, doubtless, because it is intended that I should recover, one by one, all the blessings I had lost. In a few days, my epaulets; to-morrow, the standard of the 23rd Regiment of the Line; to-day, the charming face which made my heart beat for the first time. Thou living image of the smiling past, behold me at thy feet—be my wife!"

This man of impulse put his words into action, and the spectators of this unexpected scene looked on with eyes of astonishment.

But Clementina's aunt, the severe Mdlle. Sambuco, thought it was quite time to

show her authority. She extended her long, withered hands towards Fougas, and said to him in her sharpest tone of reproof—

"Enough, sir; it is time to put an end to this most scandalous farce. I have already promised and given my niece to another. Learn that the day after to-morrow, on the 19th, she will marry M. Léon Rénault, your benefactor."

"And I shall oppose it; do you hear that, old lady; and if she persists in marrying this fellow I shall—"

"What will you do?"

"I shall curse her."

Léon could not help laughing; the malediction of this Colonel of twenty-four seemed to him more comical than alarming.

But Clementina turned pale, burst into tears, and fell at the Colonel's feet.

"Sir," cried she, kissing his hands, "do not overwhelm a poor girl who reveres you, who loves you, who will even sacrifice her happiness to your wishes. By every mark of affection I have bestowed on you for the last month, by the tears I have shed on your coffin, by the respectful zeal that made me hasten your resuscitation, I implore you to pardon our offence. I will not marry Léon if you forbid me to do so; I will do anything you please; nay, I will obey you in everything, but for pity's sake, spare me your curse."

"Embrace me," said Fougas. "You yield—I forgive you."

Clementina got up, radiant with joy,

and held out to him her pure white forehead.

The stupefaction of the witnesses, especially those most interested, is more easily imagined than described. An old mummy dictating laws, breaking off marriages and enforcing his will in the house!

Pretty little Clementina, usually so reasonable, so obedient, so glad to marry Léon, sacrificing all at once her happiness, nay, even her duty, to the caprice of an intruder!

M. Nibor confessed it was enough to make one go mad. As to Léon, he would have dashed his head against the wall if his mother had not restrained him.

"Ah, my poor child," cried she, "why did you ever bring us that thing from Berlin?"

"It is my fault," said M. Rénault.

"No," replied Dr. Martout, "it is mine."

The members of the Parisian Commission argued with M. Rollon on the novelty of the case.

"Had they resuscitated a madman? Had the revivification produced some disorder in the nervous system? Was it the amount of wine taken during the first meal which had caused a rush of blood to the head? What a strange autopsy it would be if they could dissect Master Fougas there and then!"

"You would only have your trouble for your pains, gentlemen," said the Colonel of the 23rd. "The autopsy might perhaps explain the delirium of the unfortu-

nate man, but it would never clear up the mystery of the impression he has produced on this young lady. Is it fascination, magnetism, or what?"

Whilst the friends and relations wept, argued, and whispered around him, Fougas, serene and smiling, gazed into Clementina's eyes, who returned his loving looks.

"We must put an end to this!" exclaimed Mdlle. Sambuco, severely. "Come, Clementina."

Fougas seemed astonished.

"What," said he, "does she not live here?"

"No, sir; she lives with me."

"Then I shall escort her home. My angel, will you take my arm?"

"Oh yes, with pleasure."

Léon ground his teeth.

"A pretty thing! He speaks in that familiar way, and she seems to like it."

Léon looked for his hat, intending at least to accompany the aunt, but his hat was no longer there. Fougas did not possess one of his own, and had coolly taken Léon's. The poor lover put on a cap and followed Fougas and Clementina, with the highly respectable Virginia, whose arm was as sharp as a scythe.

By a coincidence which repeated itself almost daily, the colonel of cuirassiers met Clementina, who remarked to Fougas—

"It is M. du Marnet; his club is at the end of our street, and he lives on the opposite side of the Park. I believe he is very

much in love with me, but I never admired him. The only man who has ever touched my heart is Léon Rénault."

"What about me?" asked Fougas.

"Oh, as to you, that is a very different kind of thing. I respect and fear you. I look upon you in the light of a good, kind parent."

"Thank you!"

"I am really telling you the truth, as far as I know my own feelings. I confess they are not very clear to me. I don't quite understand myself."

"Azure flower of innocence! how I admire thy sweet embarrassment! Let love have its own way, it will soon assume the mastery."

"I know nothing about that, it may—

here we are at home—good night; kiss me if you like!"

"Good night, Léon; don't quarrel with M. Fougas, I love him with all my heart, but I love you in a very different way, dear!"

Aunt Virginia made no reply to Fougas' good night. When the two men were alone in the street, Léon walked on without speaking till they reached the first lamp-post, there he stopped, and resolutely facing the Colonel, he said—

"Now sir, that we are alone, let us understand each other. I don't know by what philtre or incantation you have obtained such power over my betrothed, but I know that I love her, and that she has loved me for four years, and I shall

stick at nothing to retain and protect her."

"Friend," replied Fougas, "you can brave me with impunity, gratitude chains my arm; never shall it be written in history: Pierre Victor Fougas was an ingrate."

"Would there be more ingratitude in cutting each other's throats, than in stealing my wife from me?"

"Oh, my benefactor! learn to understand and forgive. God forbid that I should marry Clementina in spite of you and her own wishes. It is from herself and you that I trust to obtain her; think how dear she has been to me, not merely for four years as in your case, but for nearly half a century. Consider how lonely I am here

below, and that her sweet face is my sole consolation. You, who have restored me to life, do you forbid me to be happy? Have you recalled me to this world only to plunge me into grief? Tiger! take back the life you gave, if you won't allow me to devote it to the adorable Clementina."

"By Jove! my dear fellow, you are grand! The habit of conquering must have entirely warped your judgment. My hat is on your head, you took it—well and good! but because my future wife happens vaguely to resemble some young lady at Nancy, I must give her up to you indeed! Not if I know it!"

"Friend, I will return you your hat whenever you buy me a new one, but don't ask me to renounce Clementina. First of

all, how do you know that she will give me up?"

"I am certain of it."

"She loves me."

"You are quite mad!"

"You saw her at my feet."

"What of that? It was fear, respect, superstition, what the devil you like to call it—anything but love!"

"We shall soon see after we have been married six months."

"But," cried Léon, "have you any right to dispose of yourself in this way? There is another Clementina—the real one—she sacrificed everything for you, honour binds you to her, can Colonel Fougas be deaf to the voice of honour?"

"You are laughing at me, how in the

name of fortune can I marry a woman of sixty-four?"

"You ought to do so, if not for her sake, at least for your son's."

"My son is grown up, he must be forty-six years old; he no longer needs my help."

"He needs your name."

"I will adopt him."

"The law forbids that; you are not fifty yet, and he is not fifteen years younger than you, on the contrary, he is older."

"Well, then I will legitimise him by marrying Clementina the younger!"

"What—would you have her acknowledge a son who is double her age?"

"But then I can't acknowledge him either, and I have no mind to marry the old one. Besides, what is the good of my

bothering my head about a son who may perhaps be dead?—what am I saying? —perhaps never was born! I love and am beloved! that is the one thing certain, and you shall be best man at my wedding."

"Not yet! Mdlle. Sambuco is still a minor, and my father is her guardian."

"Your father is an honourable man, and he will not be so mean as to refuse me her hand."

"At any rate he will enquire if you have position, rank, fortune to offer his ward."

"My position? a colonel! My rank? a colonel! My fortune? the pay of a colonel! and those millions at Dantzic. I must not forget them! Here we are at home, give me the will of that excellent fellow who wore the lilac wig, give me also some volumes

of history—plenty of books—especially those that speak of Napoleon."

Young Rénault sorrowfully obeyed the tyrant he had given himself; he conducted him to the best room, gave him M. Meiser's will, a whole shelf of books from the library, and wished his mortal enemy good night. The Colonel insisted on embracing him, and said—

"I shall never forget that to you I owe my life and Clementina. Till to-morrow, noble and generous son of my country, till to-morrow!"

Léon went downstairs, passed through the dining-room—where Bridget was busily wiping the glasses and putting away the plate—and rejoined his father and mother, who were watching for him in the drawing-room. All the guests were gone, and the

wax lights put out; a single lamp lit up the darkness; and the two mandarins, immovable in their dark corner, seemed to be reflecting gravely on the caprices of fortune.

"Well," said Mme. Rénault.

"I have left him in his room more obstinate and madder than ever. Nevertheless, I have an idea."

"So much the better," replied his father, "for we have not one left. Grief has made us quite stupid—but above all no quarrel; these soldiers of the Empire were terrible swordsmen."

"Oh, I am not afraid of him! It is Clementina who terrifies me. With what sweetness and submission she listened to that confounded prater."

"The heart of a woman is an unfathom-

able abyss. But after all, what do you mean to do?"

Léon unfolded the plan he had conceived in the street during his conversation with Fougas.

"The most important point just now is to withdraw Clementina from this influence. Let him go away to-morrow, and perhaps reason will resume her sway, and we shall be married the next day. That once over, I will be responsible for the rest."

"But how can we get rid of a maniac like that?"

"I only see one way, but it is almost sure to succeed, to work upon his ruling passion. Those sort of people sometimes fancy themselves in love, when in reality it is only the smell of powder they care

for. We must throw Fougas into the routine of military life. The breakfast at the Colonel's to-morrow will be a good preparation. I told him to-day that the first thing he ought to do was to claim his rank and his epaulets, and he fell into the trap. He will therefore go to Paris, and may find there some old leather-breeches of his acquaintance, in any case he will re-enter the service. The duties of his profession will create a powerful diversion, he will cease to think of Clementina, whom I shall have placed in safety. We shall have to furnish him with means to travel about, but monetary sacrifices are nothing in comparison with that happiness which I hope to rescue."

Mme. Rénault, who was an economical

woman, found fault with her son's generosity.

"The Colonel is an ungrateful fellow," said she, "we have already done too much for him in restoring him to life; let him get on as he can."

"No," expostulated the father, "we have no right to send him away unprovided for; beneficence obliges." This deliberation, which had lasted an hour and a quarter, was interrupted by a terrible noise. You might have thought the house was coming down.

"There he is again!" exclaimed Léon. "A sudden fit of raving madness, no doubt!"

Off he ran, followed by his parents; rushed up the stairs four steps at a time.

A candle was burning outside, which Léon took up, and pushing open the door, entered the room.

Must I confess it? Hope and joy predominated over fear—he thought himself already rid of the Colonel. But the spectacle which met his sight quickly changed the current of his ideas, and this inconsolable lover burst out laughing like a madman. The sound of kicks, fisticuffs and blows, a shapeless mass rolling on the floor in the throes of a desperate conflict; that was all he could see and hear at first. But all at once, Fougas discovered, by the light of the candle, that he had been wrestling with Bridget, and retired, piteous and confused, to bed.

The Colonel had gone to sleep over the

history of Napoleon, without extinguishing his candle, and Bridget, having finished her work, saw the light under his door, and suddenly she remembered poor Baptiste, who was, perhaps, still groaning in purgatory for having allowed himself to fall from the roof of a house. She thought that the Colonel might be able to give her some news of her lover, and rapped at the door several times; at first, gently, afterwards, more loudly. The Colonel's silence and the lighted candle made the faithful servant smell danger; the curtains might take fire, and the safety of the whole house be endangered. So she put down her own candle, opened the door, and came in on tip-toe to extinguish the light. But whether the eyes of the sleeper had vaguely seen a

shadow flitting by, or whether Bridget, being very stout and awkward, had made one of the boards creak, Fougas, half awake, hearing a rustling of petticoats, imagined an adventure in the style of those which used to enliven garrison life during the first Empire, and stretched out his arms blindly, calling on Clementina. Bridget, caught hold of by the hair and the waist, replied by so vigorous a box on the ear, that the Colonel thought himself attacked by a man. Reprisal followed on reprisal, and they finished by grappling with each other, and rolling on the floor.

The one to feel ashamed was Master Fougas. Bridget went off to bed, rather the worse for bruises; the Rénault family reasoned with the Colonel, and obtained

nearly all they demanded. He promised to leave next day, accepted, as a loan, the sum of money they offered him, and swore never to return till he had recovered his epaulets, and pocketed the Dantzic inheritance.

"Then," said he, "I shall marry Clementina."

On that point it was deemed useless to argue with him; it was an idea firmly rooted.

Every one in the house slept soundly that night: the Rénaults because they had spent three sleepless nights, Fougas and Bridget because they had exhausted each other with blows, and young Celestin because he had drained all the glasses.

The next morning Colonel Rollon came

to ascertain if Fougas was in a fit state to breakfast with him; he was afraid he might find him under cold water discipline. Not at all! The madman of the evening before was as gentle as a lamb, and fresh as a daisy. He was shaving with Léon's razors, and humming an air by Nicolo. He was delightful with his hosts, and promised Bridget to give her an annuity from M. Meiser's property.

As soon as he had gone off to the breakfast, Léon ran to Clementina's house.

"Everything is going on splendidly," said he. "The Colonel is much more reasonable; he has promised to leave today for Paris. So we can be married tomorrow."

Mdlle. Sambuco approved very much of

this plan, not only because she had made great preparations for the wedding, but also because a marriage deferred is always the talk of the town. The letters of announcement were already posted, the Mayor had been duly informed, the chapel of the Virgin had been engaged in the parish church. To countermand all that on account of the whim of a ghost and a lunatic was to fly in the face of society and Heaven itself.

Clementina's only answer was her tears. She never could be happy unless she did marry Léon, but she would rather die, she said, than give him her hand without M. Fougas' permission. She promised to implore his consent upon her knees, and obtain it by force of entreaty.

"But suppose he should refuse? and this is more than likely."

"I will go on beseeching him till he says yes."

Every one joined in trying to convince her of her folly, Léon, her aunt, M. and Mme. Rénault, and all the mutual friends of the two houses. She gave in at last; but at that very moment the door opened, and M. Audret rushed into the drawing-room, exclaiming—

"Here is a fine piece of news! Colonel Fougas and M. du Marnet are going to fight to-morrow."

The young girl fell, as if shot, into Léon's arms.

"It is a punishment on me," she exclaimed, "and the chastisement of my

wickedness has not tarried. Will you still force me to obey you? Shall I be dragged to the altar, in opposition to his wishes, at the very moment, perhaps, when he is sacrificing his life?"

No one dared insist any longer, seeing her in such a pitiable state, but Léon inwardly hoped that fortune might favour the colonel of cuirassiers. That he was wrong, I own, but where is the lover sufficiently virtuous to throw the first stone? We will now relate how the handsome Fougas had spent his day.

At ten o'clock in the morning the two junior captains of the 23rd came to escort him with all due ceremony to their Colonel's house. M. Rollon lived in a little palace built during the Imperial dynasty. A

marble slab over the gateway still bore this inscription, "Ministry of Finance," memento of those glorious times when the court of Napoleon followed its sovereign to Fontainebleau!

Colonel Rollon, the Lieutenant-Colonel, the fat Major, three Chiefs of battalions, the Surgeon-Major, and ten or twelve officers were awaiting outside the house the arrival of this illustrious ghost. The standard had been planted in the middle of the courtyard, guarded by an ensign and a handful of non-commissioned officers selected for this honour. The band of the regiment filled up the background of the picture, at the entrance of the garden. Eight trophies of arms, improvised that very morning by the gunsmiths of the

corps, embellished the walls and the railings.

A company of grenadiers, with muskets grounded, awaited his arrival.

As soon as Fougas entered, the band began to play the famous "Partant pour la Syrie," the grenadiers presented arms, the drums beat, the non-commissioned officers and soldiers cried out, "Long live Colonel Fougas," and the officers hastened in a body towards the ancestor of their regiment. All this was neither regular form, nor according to strict discipline, but something must be forgiven to these brave soldiers who had just recovered an ancestor. It was to them a little debauch of glory.

The hero of the day pressed the Colonel's hand and those of his officers with as much

warmth as if he was welcoming old friends. He bowed cordially to the non-commissioned officers and the soldiers, walked up to the standard, went down on one knee, then rising proudly, seized the staff, and turning to the attentive crowd, began as follows—

"Friends, it is under the shadow of the standard that a soldier of France, after forty-six years exile, again finds his family. All honour be to thee, symbol of our country—old companion of our victories, heroic mainstay in our misfortunes! Thy radiant eagle has soared over Europe cowering and prostrate. Thy battered eagle struggled still against fortune, and spread terror among potentates! All honour be to thee who hast led us on to

glory, to thee who hast protected us from the apathy of despair! I have seen thee always unfurled in the midst of supreme danger, proud flag of my country! Men fell around thee like ears of corn before the sickle of the reaper; thou alone lifted up thy invincible front to the enemy. Bullets and balls have pierced thee with wounds, but never has an audacious stranger dared to put his hand on thee. May the future wreathe thy brow with fresh laurels; mayest thou conquer new and vast kingdoms, which fate can no longer wrest from us. The grand epoch is going to live again; believe in the voice of a warrior who issues from the grave to say to you, 'Forward.' Yes, I swear it by the ashes of him who commanded us at Wagram!

There are still grand days in store for France as long as you shelter under your glorious folds the fortunes of the 23rd Regiment!"

This military and patriotic eloquence took every heart by storm. Fougas was cheered, congratulated, embraced, and almost carried in triumph to the banqueting-room.

Seated at table, facing M. Rollon, as if he had been a second master of the house, he breakfasted well, talked a good deal, and drank still more. One sometimes meets in the world men who are intoxicated without drinking. Fougas was not one of these; he never got drunk under three bottles; indeed, he frequently passed that limit without knocking under.

The toasts which were given at dessert were remarkable for their energy and cordiality. I should like to cite them one after the other, but I find they would take up too much space, and that the last ones, which were the most touching, were not of a Voltairian clearness.

They rose from table at two o'clock, and went in a body to the military café, where the officers of the 23rd had ordered punch at their own expense for the two colonels. They had also invited the superior officers of the regiment of cuirassiers, from a feeling of what was due to etiquette.

Fougas, who had drank more himself than a whole batallion of Swiss, was shaking hands all round; but through the mist which obscured his faculties, he recognised

M. du Marnet, and made a wry face. Amongst officers, and especially those of different branches of the service, politeness is, perhaps, a little exaggerated, etiquette rather strict, and self-love somewhat easily offended. M. du Marnet, who was a man of unexceptionable good breeding, understood at once, by Fougas' manner, that he was unfriendly towards him.

The punch was brought in all ablaze! allowed to go out, and was helped round with a large ladle into at least sixty glasses. Fougas touched glasses with every one but M. du Marnet. The conversation, which was noisy and diffuse, unfortunately turned upon some professional point. A commandant of cuirassiers asked Fougas if he had seen that fine charge of Bourdesoulle's,

which scattered the Austrians in the valley of Plauen.

Fougas had personally known General Bourdesoulle, and witnessed that grand manœuvre of heavy cavalry, which decided the victory of Dresden; but, in order to annoy M. du Marnet, he affected an air of ignorance and indifference.

"In our time," said he, "the cavalry was put to work after the battles. We made use of it to drive back the enemy whom we had dispersed."

There was a general outcry at this, and, by way of protest, the glorious name of Murat was quoted.

"No doubt, no doubt," said he, throwing up his head, "Murat was a good general in his little sphere; he was quite

equal to what was expected of him! But if the cavalry had Murat, the infantry had Napoleon!"

M. du Marnet judiciously observed that Napoleon, if, indeed, he were to be claimed by any one particular branch, belonged really to the artillery.

"As you please, sir," said Fougas, "the artillery and the infantry. Artillery in the distance, infantry at close quarters—cavalry aside."

"Excuse me again," resumed M. du Marnet, "you mean on the side, which is quite another thing."

"On the side—aside—it's all the same to me! For my part, were I commander-in-chief, I should put the cavalry to one side."

Several cavalry officers now threw themselves into the discussion; but M. du Marnet gave them quietly to understand that he wished to discuss the matter with Fougas himself only.

"And why, may I ask, would you do away with the cavalry?"

"Because a cavalry officer is only half a soldier."

"Half a soldier?"

"Yes, sir; and the proof is, that Government is obliged to buy four or five thousand francs worth of horse flesh to complete him. Suppose the horse receives a gun-shot or bayonet wound, the officer is of no further good. Have you ever seen a cavalry officer on foot? by Jove, it is a caution!"

"I see myself every day on foot, and have never considered myself ridiculous."

"Oh, I am too polite to contradict you!"

"And I, sir, am too upright to oppose one paradox to another. What would you think of my logic if I were to say to you (the idea is not my own; I found it in a book), if I were to say to you, 'I admire the infantry, but the foot soldier is only half a soldier—a disinherited man, an invalid, deprived of that very natural complement of a warrior which we call a horse? I admire his courage, I admit that he may be of use in warfare, but, after all, poor devil, he has only his two legs to go upon, while we rejoice in four!' You consider a cavalry officer ridiculous on foot, but does

a liner always cut a very brilliant figure on horseback? I have seen admirable infantry captains, who were cruelly embarrassed when they were made majors! They have been heard to say, 'All very well to rise in rank, but not so easy to rise in the saddle!'"

This old joke amused the audience for a moment; they laughed, and Fougas grew more and more irritable.

"In my time," said he, "a foot soldier became a good horseman in twenty-four hours; and, if any one will take a ride with me, sword in hand, I will show him what the infantry is made of."

"Sir," coldly replied M. du Marnet, "I hope that opportunity will be afforded you in time of war. It is then that a true

soldier shows his ability and courage. Cavalry or infantry, we all belong to France. She it is I now toast, sir, and I hope you will not refuse to clink your glass against mine to France."

Well spoken and well reasoned. In truth the clinking of the glasses showed that M. du Marnet had won his cause. Fougas himself drew near his adversary, and frankly drank with him, but he whispered in his ear, speaking very thickly—

"It is my turn to hope you will not refuse the little encounter which I had the honour of proposing to you just now?"

"As you please," returned the colonel of cuirassiers.

The ghost, more drunk than ever, left the assembly with two officers whom he

had picked out at random. He declared to thèm that he considered himself insulted by M. du Marnet; that the challenge had been offered and accepted, and that it was a settled thing.

"All the more," added he; "because there is a lady in the case! These are my conditions—they are all to the honour of the infantry, the army, and France! We will fight on horseback, stripped to the waist, mounted on two bare-backed steeds, the weapons to be cavalry sabres; the first blood drawn to decide the issue. I only want to correct a fop, I do not wish to deprive the country of a soldier."

These conditions were pronounced absurd by the seconds of M. du Marnet, but were, nevertheless, accepted; for military

honour will brave any danger, even though absurd.

Fougas passed the remainder of the day in driving the Rénaults nearly wild.

Aware of the power he possessed over Clementina, he made known his wishes; swore he would have Clementina for his wife, as soon as he had recovered his rank, family, and fortune, and forbid her disposing of herself till that time.

He quarrelled outright with Léon and his parents, refused their assistance, and left the house, after a mutual exchange of hard words.

Léon ended by saying he would only relinquish Clementina with his life. The Colonel shrugged his shoulders, and took himself off, without giving a thought to

the clothes of the father and the son's hat, which he carried away with him.

He borrowed 500 francs from Colonel Rollon, took a room at the Hotel du Cadran Bleu, went to bed without his supper, and slept straight off the reel till the arrival of the seconds.

There was no need to jog his memory as to the events of the day before. The drowsiness of punch and sleep combined passed off in a second. Plunging his head and hands into a bucket of cold water, he said—

"There, my toilet is over. Long live the Emperor. Let us go and take up our position."

The ground chosen by common consent was the exercise ground. It is a sandy

plain in the midst of the forest, some distance from the town.

All the officers of the garrison had gone there of their own accord; no need to invite any of them. More than one soldier ran there surreptitiously, and took up his position in a tree. Even the constabulary itself adorned this family gathering with its presence.

They went to witness not only an heroic tournament between cavalry and infantry, but also between the old army and the new.

The spectacle answered fully the expectation of the spectators. No one had any desire to hiss the performance, and every one had enough for his money.

Precisely at nine o'clock the combatants

entered the lists, with their four seconds and the umpire.

Fougas, stripped to the waist, was as handsome as a heathen god. His supple and muscular frame, his proud and confident air, the manly grace of his movements met with warm applause. As he entered, he made his English horse prance and rear as he lowered the point of his sword, and bowed to the spectators.

M. du Marnet, who was fair and strong, and modelled like the Indian Bacchus, rather than an Achilles, had a slight frown of annoyance on his brow.

It was easy to see that this duel *in naturabilis* fought in the sight of his own officers, appeared to him useless and even ridiculous. His steed was a half-bred cob, strong and full of spirit.

Fougas' seconds rode rather badly, and divided their attention between the combat and their stirrups.

M. du Marnet had chosen the two best riders in his regiment—the commandant of a squadron and a captain-commandant. The umpire was Colonel Rollon, also a first-rate horseman.

As soon as he gave the signal, Fougas rushed at his adversary, lowering the point of his weapon like a cavalry soldier charging a square of infantry. But he stopped short at three horse lengths, and described seven or eight rapid circles round M. du Marnet, like an Arab in a fantasia.

M. du Marnet, obliged to turn round and defend himself on all sides, put spurs to his horse, broke the circle, rode off some distance, and threatened to perform the

same manœuvre around Fougas; but the ghost did not wait for him. He galloped off at full speed, making the tour of the hippodrome, all the while pursued by M. du Marnet.

The cuirassier being heavier, and riding a less swift animal, was soon distanced; he revenged himself by crying out to Fougas—

"You should have let me know it was a race and not a combat, and I would have brought my whip, and not my sabre."

But Fougas was already upon him, furious and breathless.

"Wait for me," shouted he. "I have shown you the horseman, now you shall see the soldier."

And he struck a blow with the point of

his sword which would have run his adversary through like a hoop if M. du Marnet had not parried the thrust in time. He responded by a fine stroke in quart, sufficiently powerful to have cut the invincible Fougas in two. But the latter, as active as a monkey, warded it off with his whole body, letting himself slip off to the ground and remounting again in an instant.

"Allow me to compliment you," said M. du Marnet, "it could not have been better done at a circus."

"Or on the battle-field either," retorted the other. "Ah, scoundrel! you try to humbug the old army! Take that—missed!—thanks for the parry, but it was not quite good enough. I shall not die of that!—there! there! there! So you pre-

tend that a foot soldier is a man incomplete —we will make you incomplete fast enough! Here's a thrust for you! Ah, he has parried it! He imagines, no doubt, that he will be hanging about under Clementina's windows. There, take that for Clementina—and that for the infantry. Will you parry that, too? Yes, traitor!—and that one?—again? You will parry them all then, confound you. Victory!—at last, my fine gentleman, your blood flows!"

"What have I done! To the devil with my sword, horse—everything! Major! Major! come quickly! Sir, let me receive you in my arms! Brute that I am! as if all soldiers were not brothers! Friend, forgive me—I would buy back every drop

of your blood by shedding my own! Miserable Fougas, incapable of mastering his fierce passions. Oh, Esculapius of Mars! tell me that the thread of his life is not cut short! I could not survive him, for he is a brave man!"

M. du Marnet had a tremendous cut through the left arm and side, and the blood flowed in a frightful manner.

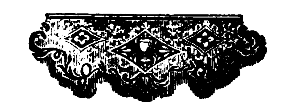
The surgeon, who had provided himself with hæmostatic water, made all haste to stop the hæmorrhage. The wound was long, but not deep, and there was every chance of its healing in a day or two.

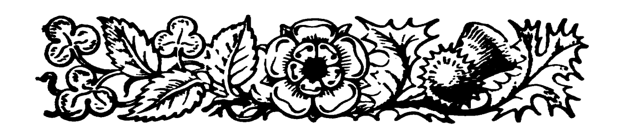
Fougas himself carried his adversary to his carriage, and that was by no means a light matter. He insisted upon accompanying the two officers who took M. du Marnet

home; he overpowered the wounded man with his protests, swearing eternal friendship the whole way.

Arrived there, he put him to bed, embraced him, deluged him with his tears, and never left him till he heard him snoring.

It was then striking six o'clock. He went off to dine at his hotel with the umpire and his two seconds, whom he had invited after the duel, entertained them magnificently, and got gloriously drunk himself.





CHAPTER II.

WHERE IT WILL BE SEEN THAT THE DISTANCE IS NOT GREAT FROM THE CAPITOL TO THE TARPEIAN ROCK.

THE next day having been to call on M. du Marnet, he wrote thus to Clementina—

"Light of my life, I quit this spot which has witnessed my fatal courage and is the depository of my love. It is towards the heart of the capital, to the foot of the throne that I bend my steps. Should the great war-god's successor not prove insen-

sible to the voice of that blood which flows through his veins, he will give me back my sword, and my epaulets, that I may lay them at thy feet. Only be faithful to me and hope; may these lines serve as a talisman against the dangers which threaten thy independence. O my Clementina! keep yourself for me.

"VICTOR FOUGAS."

Clementina made him no reply, but just as he was getting into the railway carriage he was accosted by a commissioner, who put into his hand a handsome red leather portfolio, and ran off with all speed.

The case was quite new and strong with a secure fastening, and contained 1,200 francs, in bank notes, all the young girl's

savings. Fougas had no time to reflect upon this delicate matter, he was pushed into a carriage, the engine whistled, and the train started.

The Colonel found himself recalling all the different events which had succeeded each other in his life, during less than a week's time. His arrest on the icy Vistula, his sentence of death, his captivity in the tower of Liebenfeld, his awakening at Fontainebleau, the invasion of 1814, the return from Elba, the hundred days, the death of the Emperor and the King of Rome, the Bonapartist restoration of 1852, the meeting with the young girl so closely resembling Clementina Pichon, the standard of the 23rd, the duel with the colonel of cuirassiers, all, it seemed to Fougas, had

been pressed into the short space of four days! The night of 11th November, 1813, to the 17th August, 1859, appeared to him even shorter than the rest, it was the only time he ever remembered to have had an uninterrupted and dreamless sleep.

A mind less active, a heart less warm, would perhaps have lapsed into a state of semi-melancholy, for it stands to reason that a man who has slept for forty-six years, must feel rather like a fish out of water when he returns to his country. Not a relation, not a friend, not a single familiar countenance on the face of the earth! Add to that, numberless novel words, ideas, customs and inventions, which make him feel the want of a guide, and demonstrate to him how completely he is a stranger. But

Fougas on re-opening his eyes had thrown himself into the very midst of action, according to the precepts of Horace. He had improvised for himself friends, enemies, a lady-love, a rival. Fontainebleau, his second birth-place, was for the time the chief town of his existence, he felt that there he was liked, hated, feared, admired, known, in fact. He felt sure that in that prefecture, at any rate, his name could never be pronounced in the future without awakening an echo. But what drew him by still closer ties to modern times was his firmly established relationship with the great family of the army. Wherever the French flag floats, a soldier, be he young or old, always feels at home. Round this steeple of the fatherland, far dearer and more sacred than the

steeple of his village, language, ideas, institutions, undergo but little change. Men may die, they are replaced by others, who are like them, who think, speak, act in the same manner, who are not satisfied with merely donning the uniform of their predecessors, but who also inherit their memories, their past glory, their traditions, jokes and even certain intonations of voice. This explains in some measure the sudden friendship of Fougas for the new Colonel of the 23rd, after the first pang of jealousy, and the warm sympathy he showed with M. du Marnet as soon as he saw his blood flow. Soldiers' quarrels are like family discussions, they never obliterate the ties of relationship.

Firmly persuaded that he was not alone

in the world, Fougas delighted in every new object that civilization presented to his gaze. The speed of the railway absolutely intoxicated him, he felt quite enthusiastic about this steam power of which the theory was a dead letter to him, but whose results he still could follow.

"With a thousand engines like this, two thousand rifled cannon, and two hundred thousand strong fellows like myself, Napoleon would have conquered the world in six weeks. Why does not this young man, who is now on the throne, make use of the instruments he has to hand? Perhaps he has never thought about it. Very good, I am going to see him. If he appears to me to be a capable person, I will give him the benefit of my ideas, he

will then make me his minister of war, and forward—march!"

He had made enquiries about the long steel wires which run from post to post, all the length of the line.

"By Jove! They are swift and discreet aides-de-camp," said he, "only put all that into the hands of a staff major like Berthier, the universe might be enclosed as if caught in a net, by the mere will of one man alone!"

His meditations were interrupted three kilos from Melun by the sound of a foreign tongue. He pricked up his ears, then bounded in his corner like a man who has sat down on a bundle of thorns. Horror of horrors! It was English! One of those monsters who had assassinated Napoleon

at St. Helena in order to ensure the monopoly of cotton, had just entered the compartment, with a pretty wife and two beautiful children.

"Guard—stop," cried Fougas, leaning half of his body half out of the window.

"Sir," said the Englishman, in good French, "I advise you to wait patiently till we come to the next station. The guard does not hear you, and you are running a risk of falling out. If I can do anything for you, in the meantime, I have a flask of brandy, and a travelling medicine chest."

"No, sir," replied Fougas in the surliest tone, "I want nothing, and I would rather die than accept anything from an Englishman! I called the guard, because I wished

to change carriages, and rid my eyes of seeing an enemy of the Emperor's!"

"I assure you, sir," returned the Englishman, "that I am by no means an enemy of the Emperor's. I had the honour of being received by him when he lived in London; he has even condescended to stay a few days with me at my country house in Lancashire."

"So much the better for you, if that young man is good enough to forget what you have done to his family, but Fougas will never pardon your crimes towards his country."

Thereupon, having reached the next station, he opened the door, and dashed into another compartment, where he found himself alone with two young men who had

not English physiognomies, and who spoke French with the purest Touraine accent. They each wore a signet ring on their little finger, so that no one could be ignorant of their standing as gentlemen. Fougas was too plebeian to care much for noble birth, but coming from a compartment occupied by English, he was only too happy to meet two Frenchmen.

"Friends," said he, bending towards them with a cordial smile, we are children of the same mother. Good-day to you, your appearance re-invigorates me."

The two young fellows stared, half bowed, and then continued their conversation.

"So that, my dear Adolphus," said one, "you have seen the King at Frohsdorf?"

"Yes, my good Americ, and he received me with the most touching kindness. 'Viscount,' said he, 'you come of a race well known for its fidelity. We will remember you when God pleases to re-establish us on the throne of our ancestors. Tell our brave nobles in Touraine that we recommend ourselves to their prayers, and that we shall not forget them in ours."

"Pitt and Coburg!" hissed Fougas between his teeth, "here are two young fellows who are conspiring with Condé's army. But patience."

He clenched his fists and listened attentively.

"He said nothing to you about politics?"

"A few words of no significance; between ourselves, I don't think he troubles him-

self much about it, he is waiting for what may happen."

"He won't have to wait much longer."

"Who knows?"

"What do you mean? who knows? The Empire can't last six months longer. Monseigneur de Montereau was saying so only last Monday, at my aunt's, the canoness."

"Well, I allow them a year, because this Italian campaign has given them a certain prestige among the lower class. Oh, I did not hesitate to tell the King so."

"On my honour, gentlemen, this is too much," interrupted Fougas. "Can it be possible that Frenchmen talk like this in France, of her institutions? Go back to your master and tell him that the Empire

is eternal because it is based on the granite of the people, and cemented with the blood of heroes! And if the King should ask who told you so, you may answer it was Colonel Fougas, who was decorated at Wagram by the hand of the Emperor himself."

The two young men looked at each other, exchanged smiles, and the Viscount said to the Marquis in English—

"What is that?"

"A madman."

"No, my dear fellow, a mad dog."

"Nothing else."

"That's right, gentlemen," shouted the Colonel, indignantly, "begin to speak English now, you are just fit for that."

Again he changed his compartment at

in his pockets, in search of the Hotel de Nantes. Having passed three months in Paris in the year 1810, he felt sure he could find his way about the city, and accordingly he very soon lost it. But in the various quarters he passed through at random, he admired the great changes that had been made during his absence. Fougas adored long, wide streets, with fine houses in an unbroken line of uniformity; he was obliged to acknowledge that the Parisian Board of Works came very nearly up to his ideal; it was not yet absolutely perfect, but what progress it had made!

By an excusable delusion he stopped twenty times and bowed to people whose faces he thought familiar to him, but the people themselves made no return.

After walking for five hours he reached the Place du Carrousel. The Hotel de Nantes was no longer there, but in its stead they had completed the Louvre. Fougas lost at least a quarter of an hour in contemplation of this building, and half an hour more in looking at two Zouaves of the Guard, who were playing at picquet. He enquired if the Emperor was in Paris, and they pointed to the flag which floated over the Palace of the Tuileries.

"Good," said he, "but first I must get a new rig out."

He engaged a room in an hotel in the Rue St. Honoré, and asked a waiter who was the best tailor in Paris. The waiter lent him a commercial directory, and Fougas looked out the Emperor's boot maker, his shirt maker, his hatter, his hair

dresser, and his glover! He wrote down their names in the pocket book Clementina had given him, and then hired a carriage and took a drive.

As he had a small well-shaped foot, he had no difficulty in finding ready-made boots, they promised also to send him, in the course of the evening, the linen he required. But when he explained to the hatter the kind of head-gear he wished to wear, he met with difficulties. His ideal was an enormous hat, wide at the top and narrow towards the base, turned up at the sides, bent down behind and before, in fact the historical article to which Bolivet in former times gave his name. To find this the shop had to be ransacked, and ancient hoards explored and turned over.

"At last," cried the hatter, "here is what you want, if it is for a theatrical costume, you are just suited, the ludicrous effect is perfect."

Fougas replied drily that this style of hat was much less ridiculous to his mind than those which he saw every one wearing in the streets of Paris.

At the great tailor's, in the Rue de la Paix, there was nearly a battle royal.

"No, sir," said Alfred, "I refuse to make you a frogged great coat and cossack trousers. Go to Babin's or Moreau's if you want a costume for the carnival, but never shall it be said that so well made a man as yourself was turned out by us like a caricature."

"Hang it all," shouted Fougas, "you

may be a head taller than myself, sir tailor, but I am a colonel of the great Empire, and it ill beseems a drum-major to give orders to his colonel!"

This obstinate fellow would always have his own way. They took his measure, and promised to send him his clothes in twenty-four hours, made according to the fashion of 1813. They showed him various cloths to choose from, amongst them English fabrics which he refused with disdain.

"The blue cloth of France," said he, "and made in France, is what I wish for; and mind you cut them out so that every-one seeing me in plain clothes will exclaim there goes a military man!"

Officers of our day have just a contrary idea, they try as much as possible to look

like any other gentleman when they are in mufti.

In the Rue de Richelieu, Fougas ordered himself a black satin stock, which quite hid his shirt, and came up to his ears ; then he went on to the Palais Royal, walked into a well-known restaurant, and ordered dinner. As he had breakfasted standing in a pastry cook's shop on the Boulevard, his appetite, sharpened by his walk, did wonders. He drank and ate as at Fontainebleau, but when the bill had to be paid, it seemed to him rather difficult of digestion, it was a matter of a hundred francs and some centimes.

" The devil," said he, " how dear living has become in Paris ! "

The brandy alone in his bill made an

item of nine francs. They had placed before him the ordinary bottle and a glass like a thimble. This plaything diverted Fougas, and he amused himself filling and emptying it a dozen times. In spite of all this, when he rose from table he was only pleasantly lively, nothing more. It came into his head to go and try his luck at No. 113, but a bottle merchant who lived in the house, informed him that gambling had been given up in France for the last thirty years. He went into the Théatre Français, hoping that the Emperor's comedians might be acting some grand tragedy, but the play-bill displeased him. New comedies played by new actors! No Talma, Fleury, Thénard, Baptiste, Mdlle. Mars, nor Mdlle. Rancourt! At last he

decided upon the Opera, where they were acting Charles VI. The music astonished him, he was not used to such a din off the battle field, but soon his ear became accustomed to the noise of the instruments. The fatigues of the day, the repose of a comfortable seat, the effects of his dinner, all combined to make him sleepy, but suddenly he sprang into wakefulness as these words reached his ear—

> "War to the tyrant! never, never in France,
> Never shall the English reign."

"No," cried he, stretching out his arms towards the stage, "never! Let us all swear it on the altar of our country! May perfidious Albion perish, and long live the Emperor!"

The pit and the orchestra rose to a man,

not to join in Fougas' patriotic outburst, but to call him to order. After that act was over, an agent of police whispered in his ear that a gentleman who had dined in that fashion ought to go quietly to bed, and not disturb a representation at the Opera!

He replied that he had only had his usual dinner, and that this patriotic demonstration proceeded from the heart.

"But," continued he, "since, in this palace of idle luxury, hatred of an enemy is branded as a crime, I shall go and breathe a purer atmosphere, and pay my homage to the fane of glory before retiring to rest."

"You will do well," said the police-agent.

Away he stalked, more proud and erect than ever, gained the Boulevards, and hastened to the Corinthian Temple, where they terminate. On the way, he was struck with admiration at the lighting of the city. M. Martout had explained to him the manufacture of gas, of which he had not understood a syllable, but this bright, red light was a real feast to his eyes.

As soon as he arrived at the monument which commands the entrance of the Rue Royale, he stopped on the pavement, and, after collecting his thoughts for a moment, began this exordium—

" O Inspirer of all noble deeds, widow of the great conqueror of Europe, receive, oh Glory, the homage of thy devoted lover, Victor Fougas. For thy sake I have en-

dured hunger, heat and cold, and eaten the most faithful of steeds. For thee I am ready to brave fresh perils, and to find myself face to face with death in any field of battle. I prefer thee to riches, happiness, and power; do not reject the heart I offer thee, nor the life I would willingly sacrifice! In return for so much devotion, I only ask a smile from thy eyes, and a laurel thrown by thy hands!"

This prayer, in all its fervour, may, perhaps, have reached the ears of Mary Magdalen, patron saint of the ex-temple of glory! In like manner, the purchaser of an estate sometimes receives a letter intended for the former proprietor!

Fougas returned by the Rue de la Paix and the Place Vendôme, and bowed in passing to the only face he had really re-

cognised since he came to Paris. The new costume of Napoleon at the top of the column did not displease him. He preferred the little cocked hat to the crown, and the great coat to the theatrical mantle.

He spent a restless night; a thousand disconnected projects passed through his mind; he prepared the conversation he intended to hold with the Emperor; fell asleep, and awoke in a fright lest some valuable idea should suddenly vanish. Twenty times, at least, he lighted and extinguished his candle.

The remembrance of Clementina mingled at times with dreams of war and political utopias; but I am bound to confess the face of the young girl was quite in the background of the scene.

Long as the night had seemed to him,

the next morning was all too short. The idea of seeing the Emperor face to face intoxicated and froze him by turns. One moment he hoped that some omission on the part of a tradesman might furnish him with a legitimate excuse for postponing his visit to the following day. But every one showed a most disappointing exactitude. At noon precisely, the cossack pantaloons, and the frogged and braided great coat, were lying at the foot of the bed, in close companionship with the famous hat *à la* Bolivar.

"I will get dressed," said Fougas, "perhaps this young man may not be at home, in which case I will leave my name, and wait till he sends for me."

He adorned himself after his own par-

ticular fashion, and it may seem incredible to my fair readers, that Fougas, in his black satin stock and braided great coat, was neither ugly nor ridiculous. His great height and fine figure, his haughty and decided cast of features, his quick movements, were all in harmony with the costume of former times. He was peculiar, that was all!

To give himself a little Dutch courage, he went into a café, ate four cutlets, a loaf of bread weighing two pounds, and a large piece of cheese, and washed down the whole with two bottles of wine. Coffee after that, and a chasse of brandy, brought this meal to an end about two o'clock. This was the time he had fixed in his own mind.

He placed his hat gingerly to one side, buttoned his chamois leather gloves, coughed loudly once or twice in the hearing of the sentinel in the Rue de Rivoli, and finally went through the wicket gate de l'Echelle.

"Sir," cried the porter, "whom do you want?"

"The Emperor."

"Have you a letter of appointment?"

"Colonel Fougas has no need of that. Go and ask about me from him who soars over the Place Vendôme; he will tell you that the name of Fougas has always been synonymous with courage and fidelity."

"Do you mean to say that you knew the first Emperor?"

"Yes, my lad, and I have spoken to him, even as I am speaking to you."

"Really? How old are you then?"

"Seventy years, according to the clock of Time; twenty-four as inscribed on the pages of history."

The porter lifted his eyes to heaven, and murmured—

"Another one! It is the fourth this week!"

He made a sign to a little man dressed in black, who was smoking his pipe in the courtyard of the Tuileries; then he said to Fougas, laying his hand on his arm—

"My good friend, do you wish to see the Emperor?"

"Have I not already told you so, familiar individual that you are."

"Very well, you shall see him this very day. That gentleman yonder with his pipe, is the master of ceremonies, he will

conduct you. But the Emperor is not at the Palace, he is in the country. It's all the same to you, isn't it, whether you see him in the country or here?"

"What the devil does it signify?"

"And all the less as you will not have to walk; they have already called a carriage for you. Come, get in, my dear sir, and be reasonable."

Two minutes later, Fougas, accompanied by an agent, was being conveyed towards the police office.

His business was soon settled. The commissary who received him was the same who had spoken to him before at the Opera. A doctor was called, who gave the most unhesitating verdict of monomania that ever sent a man to Charenton.

Everything was done most politely and

quietly, not a word that could put the Colonel on his guard, and warn him of the fate which awaited him. He only thought the ceremony tedious and somewhat peculiar, and turned over in his mind some pithy sentences on the subject, with which he intended to favour the Emperor.

At last they sent him forward; the cab was still there. The master of the ceremonies re-lit his pipe, said a word to the driver, and seated himself on the Colonel's left. The carriage went off at a good round trot, reached the Boulevards, and took the direction of the Bastille.

They were approaching the Porte St. Martin, and Fougas, with his head out of window, was still preparing his oration, when a carriage, drawn by two splendid roans, passed, so to speak, under his very

nose. A big man, with a white moustache, turned his head, and called out "Fougas."

Robinson Crusoe, when he discovered the foot-prints of a man on his island, was not more astounded or delighted than Fougas, when he heard this exclamation. To open the door, jump out on the pavement, rush to the carriage, which by this time had stopped, and throw himself into the arms of the big man with the grey moustache, was the work of a moment. The carriage had been gone some time, when the agent of police, in full gallop, followed by the cab at a steady trot, passed all along the Boulevards, asking every policeman on the road if they had seen a madman pass that way.



CHAPTER III.

CONTAINING A MEMORABLE INTERVIEW BETWEEN COLONEL FOUGAS AND THE EMPEROR OF THE FRENCH.

WHEN he threw himself into the arms of the big man with the grey moustache, Fougas was under the impression that he was embracing Masséna. He ingenuously told him so, and the owner of the carriage burst out laughing.

"Alas! my poor old fellow," said he, "it is many years since we put the 'Child of Victory' under ground. Look me well

in the face. I am Leblanc, of the Russian campaign."

"Is it possible? You—little Leblanc!"

"Lieutenant of the 3rd battery of Artillery, who shared with you a thousand dangers, and that famous dish of roast horse, which you salted with your tears."

"What, it is really you! You, who cut me out a pair of boots from the hide of poor Zephyr—not to speak of the number of times you saved my life. Oh, brave and faithful friend, let me embrace you once more! I do recognise you now, though I must admit you are considerably altered."

"Faith, I have not been preserved in a glass jar with spirits of wine—I have lived my life."

"Ah, I see you know my history."

"I heard it spoken of yesterday evening, at the house of the Minister of Public Works. The clever man who set you on your legs again was there himself. I even went so far as to write to you on my return home, offering you a corner and a crust, and my letter must be on the road to Fontainebleau."

"Thanks, you are a true friend! I say, old fellow, what great events have taken place since Beresina! Do you know all the misfortunes that have happened?"

"I saw them all, which is still worse! I was given the command of a squadron after Waterloo. The Bourbons shelved me on half pay; my friends succeeded in getting me on active service in 1832, but somehow I was always unlucky, and have

gone the round of all the garrisons, Lille, Grenoble and Strasbourg, without ever getting on. I only got my second epaulet in 1830; after that I went to Africa. I was named General of Brigade, at Islay; I came back, and was sent from pillar to post till 1848. We had that year a fine campaign, in the very midst of Paris. My heart bleeds still whenever I think of it, and you are lucky, by Jove! not to have witnessed it. I received three balls in the body, and came out General of Division. Indeed, I have no right to complain; the Italian campaign brought me good luck. Here am I a Marshal of France, with appointments of a hundred thousand francs, and Duke of Solferino to boot. Yes! the Emperor has given me a handle to my

name! The fact is, Leblanc by itself was a little too short."

"By Jupiter!" cried Fougas, "that's right. I take my oath, Leblanc, I am not the least jealous of your good luck. It is not often a soldier rejoices in his comrade's advancement, but really, from the bottom of my heart, I say I am glad! You deserved every honour, and the blind goddess must have seen your talents and your goodness of heart through the bandage which covers her eyes!"

"Thanks! But let us talk of yourself; where were you going when I met you?"

"To see the Emperor."

"So was I; but where the devil did you expect to find him?"

"I don't know. I was being driven there!"

"But he is at the Tuileries."

"No!"

"Yes, he is. There is some mystery here; tell me the whole story."

Fougas needed no pressing, and the Marshal understood in a moment from what kind of danger he had rescued his friend.

"The porter made a mistake," he said, calmly. "The Emperor is at the Palace, and as we are on the spot, you had better come in with me. Perhaps I may be able to present you, when my audience is over."

"By all that's blue, Leblanc, my heart beats at the thought that I shall see this young man! Is he a good fellow? Can you depend upon him? Is he at all like the other?"

"You shall see for yourself. Wait here for me."

The friendship of these two men dated from the winter of 1812. During the rout of the French army, chance had brought together the gunner and the Colonel of the 23rd. One was eighteen years of age, the other not quite twenty-four. The difference of rank was easily lost sight of in their common danger; all men are equals before hunger, cold and fatigue. One morning Leblanc, with ten of his men, snatched Fougas from the hands of the Cossacks; then Fougas killed half-a-dozen laggards who were by way of coveting Leblanc's cloak. A week after, Leblanc dragged his comrade out of an old barrack, to which the peasants had set fire, and in his turn,

Fougas fished his friend out of the Beresina. The catalogue of their mutual services is too long for me to give it in its entirety. Amongst other things, the Colonel spent three weeks by the artilleryman's bedside, at Kœnigsberg, where he was seized with fever following on frost bite ; without doubt this kind nursing saved his life. This reciprocity of devotion had created so strong an attachment between them, that even a separation of forty-six years had failed to lessen it.

Fougas, left by himself in a grand saloon, had flown back in memory to the good old times, when a groom of the chambers came to tell him to take off his gloves and follow him into the Emperor's study.

Veneration for the powers that be is so

ingrained in my nature that it would not allow me to bring forward on the scene any august personages.

But the correspondence of Fougas is a matter of contemporary history, and here is a letter which he wrote to Clementina on returning to his hotel.

"Paris, What do I say ?—Paradise,
"21st August, 1859.

"My Angel,

"I am mad with joy, gratitude and admiration—I have seen him! I have spoken to him; he gave me his hand and bade me be seated. He is a great prince, he will be master of the world. He has given me the St. Helena medal and the officer's cross. Little Leblanc, an old

friend with a noble heart, took me there. He is now a Marshal of France, and a Duke under the new Empire.

"As to promotion, I must not think of it; as a prisoner of war in Prussia, located in a triple coffin, I can only take up my old rank—this is military law. But before three months are out I shall be named General of Brigade to a certainty; he was good enough to promise me this himself. What a man!—a god upon earth! Gives himself no more airs than the hero of Wagram and Moscow. He is the father of the army like the other one! He wanted to give me money out of his privy purse to defray the cost of my new equipments. I replied, 'No, sire, I have a debt to receive at Dantzic; if they pay me I shall be rich;

if they repudiate the debt my pay will suffice.'

" Thereupon—'O, goodness of Princes, thou art then not only a vain word!'—smiling to himself, as he twisted his moustache, he said—

" 'You remained in Prussia from 1813 to 1859?'

" 'Yes, sire.'

" 'A prisoner of war under exceptional conditions?'

" 'Yes, sire.'

" 'The treaties of 1814 and 1815 stipulated for the restoration of prisoners.'

" Yes, sire.'

" 'They must have been violated in your case?'

" 'Yes, sire.'

"Well, then, Prussia owes you an indemnity, and I shall demand it through the diplomatic channel?'

"'Yes, sire! What kindness!'

"This idea would never have entered my head to get back money from Prussia, that Prussia which was so greedy of our treasures in 1814 and 1815. Long live the Emperor!

"My beloved Clementina, may our glorious and magnanimous Sovereign live for ever! Long live the Empress and the Prince Imperial! I have seen them both! The Emperor presented me to his family! The Prince is a fine little soldier! He condescended to play the drum on my new hat! I shed tears over his amiability. Her Majesty the Empress, with an angelic

smile, told me she had heard of my misfortunes.

"'Oh, madam,' I replied, 'they are repaid a hundred-fold by such a moment as this.'

"'You must come and dance at the Tuileries next winter.'

"'Alas, madam! I have only danced as yet to the roar of the cannon; but no effort would be too great for me in order to please you; I will even study the art of Vestris.'

"'I easily learnt to dance a quadrille,' remarked Leblanc.

"The Emperor deigned to say he was glad to recover an officer like myself who had been through, only yesterday as it were, the finest campaigns of this country, and

who preserved the traditions of the great war.

"This praise emboldened me. I ventured to remind him of the famous principle of the good old times, always to sign their treaties of peace in the capitals.

"'Take care,' exclaimed he; "it was by virtue of this principle that the allied armies twice entered Paris to sign peace there.'

"'They shall never come any more,' cried I, 'unless they trample upon my body!'

"I pointed out the objections to a too great familiarity with England. I declared my wish soon to begin a conquest of the world; first of our own frontiers, then the natural frontier of Europe—for Europe is

the suburb of France, and we cannot annex her too quickly!

"The Emperor shook his head, as if he disagreed with me. Can he be entertaining pacific notions? No! I won't harbour such a thought for a moment, it would be the death of me!

"He asked me what I thought of the changes I had found in Paris. I replied, with all the sincerity of a proud spirit—

"'Sire, this new City of Paris is the *chef d'œuvre* of a great reign; but I trust your ediles are not going to rest upon their oars.'

"'What is there still wanting, then, according to your idea?'

"'Above all, to straighten the course of the Seine, whose winding curves are quite

distressing—a straight line is the shortest road from one point to another, in rivers as in roads. In the second place, to level the ground, and do away with all accidents of soil which seem to say to the Administration, thou art less powerful than Nature. Having accomplished this preparatory work, I would mark out a circle of three miles in diameter, whose circumference, represented by a handsome railing, should form the enclosure of Paris. In the centre I would construct a palace for your Majesty and the Princes of the Imperial family, a vast and imposing edifice that should include all branches of the public service among its dependencies ; staff-quarters, tribunals, museums, Ministerial offices, archbishop's palace, police centre, institute, embassies,

prisons, Bank of France, Lyceums, theatres, office of the *Moniteur*, imperial printing-house, Gobelin and Sèvre manufactures, Commissariat.

"'This Palace, which should be circular in form, and built in a magnificent style of architecture, should join twelve boulevards a hundred and twenty metres wide, ending in twelve railways, called after the Marshals of France. Each boulevard should have on either side a uniform row of houses four storeys high, with an iron railing in front and a little garden of ninety feet, laid out in regular designs. A hundred streets, sixty metres wide, should connect the boulevards, and be intersected, in their turn, by narrow streets of thirty-five metres, all uniformly built, according to

government plans, with iron railings, gardens and regulation flowers. The proprietors should be forbidden to allow any trade to be carried on, for the sight of shops lowers the mind and degrades the soul, shopkeepers should be permitted to establish themselves in the suburbs, subject to certain laws. The ground floor of all these houses should be occupied as stables and kitchens; the first floor rented by people with an income of a hundred thousand francs; on the second storey, those of ninety thousand; the third storey for incomes of from sixty to ninety thousand; the fourth, of fifty to sixty thousand. Under a yearly income of fifty thousand, no one to be allowed to live in Paris. The workmen to live ten kilos from the enclo-

sure, in artisan fortresses. We would exempt them from taxes, so as to be popular amongst them. We would surround them with cannon, that they might fear us. That is my conception of Paris!'

"The Emperor listened patiently, while he twirled his moustache.

"'Your plan,' said he, 'would cost a great deal.'

"'Not much more than the one that has been adopted,' replied I.

"At these words a genial hilarity, whose cause I felt quite at a loss to understand, lighted up his thoughtful countenance.

"'Don't you think,' asked he, 'that your project would be the ruin of many?'

"'What matter,' cried I, 'since it would only ruin the rich?'

"At this he laughed all the more, and took leave of me saying—

"'Colonel Fougas, you must remain a Colonel until we can make you a general.'

"A second time he permitted me to shake hands with him. I bowed my adieux to my friend Leblanc, who had invited me to dine with him in the evening, and I went back to the hotel, to pour out my joy into thy sympathising bosom. Clementina, only trust me, you will be happy and I shall be great. To-morrow morning I leave for Dantzic. Gold is a chimera, but you must be rich. A sweet kiss on thy pure forehead!

"VICTOR FOUGAS."

The subscribers of the *Patrie*, who file

their papers, are requested to go back to the issue of 23rd August, 1859. They will see amongst the special paragraphs, and the general news items, the following which I have taken the liberty of transcribing.

"His Excellency Field Marshal the Duke of Solferino had the honour to present, yesterday, to his Majesty the Emperor, a hero of the first Empire, Colonel Fougas, whom an almost miraculous event (already mentioned in a report of the Academy of Science) has just restored to his country."

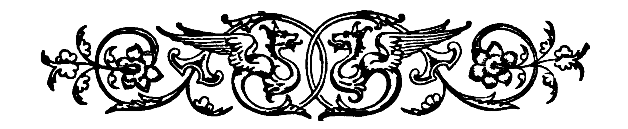
That is the special paragraph, now for the general news item.

"A madman (the fourth this week, and one of the most dangerous of the kind) presented himself yesterday at the wicket

of l'Echelle. Attired in a grotesque costume, his eye glaring, his hat far back on his head, using the most familiar tone in addressing persons of the highest respectability with unheard of rudeness, he tried to force his way through, and intrude himself, God knows with what intention, upon the presence of the Emperor. In the midst of his incoherent harangue, the words 'bravery, Place Vendôme, fidelity, clock of Time and tablets of history,' might be distinguished. Stopped by an agent of the secret service, and brought before the commissary of the Tuileries section, he was recognised as the same individual who, the evening before at the Opera, had interrupted with the most indecorous exclamations, the representation

of Charles VI. After having undergone an interrogatory in form, he was despatched to the hospital at Charenton. But upon nearing the Porte St. Martin, taking advantage of a block of carriages, and exerting the Herculean strength he possesses, he extricated himself from the hands of the keeper, threw him to the ground, struck him, and with one bound rushed on to the boulevard, and was lost in the crowd. The most active search was immediately instituted, and we understand from an authentic source that they are already on the track of the fugitive."





CHAPTER IV.

M. MEISER, THE RICH PROPRIETOR AT DANTZIC, RECEIVES AN UNWELCOME VISITOR.

THE wisdom of all nations assert that ill-gotten gain profits none. I maintain that the robbers profit thereby considerably more than the robbed, and the handsome fortune amassed by Nicholas Meiser is a case in point.

The nephew of the celebrated physiologist, after having brewed a large quantity of beer, with very little hops, and unjustly reaped the harvest of Fougas's inheritance,

had amassed in business a fortune of from eight to ten million of francs. By what business? That is what I never was told, all I know is that he considered every kind of business fair which brought in a good return for his money. Lending small sums of money at high interest, laying in large stores of wheat to supply the dearth which he had himself created, selling up unfortunate creditors, chartering two or three ships for trading in black flesh on the coast of Africa, those were the kind of speculations which the good man no way despised. He never boasted of them, because he was a modest man, but he certainly never blushed for them either, having allowed his conscience to expand in proportion to his capital; otherwise a man of honour accord-

ing to the commercial acceptation of the term, he would have been capable of butchering the whole human race, rather than have his signature protested. The Banks of Dantzic, Berlin, Vienna and Paris thought highly of him—they all held large deposits of his.

He was big, stout and florid, and lived in clover; his wife had too long a nose, and was too bony, but she loved him sincerely, and made him all kinds of good dishes. A perfect sympathy of feeling united this couple. They conversed together with the utmost candour, and made no secret naturally of their evil thoughts; every year in the autumn, when term time arrived, they turned five or six families of poor artisans into the street, because they were unable

to pay their rent, but that did not prevent their eating a good dinner afterwards, and the evening kiss given and received was none the less sweet.

The husband was sixty-six, the wife sixty-four, and their appearance was such as to inspire good-will and command respect. They only wanted grandchildren to complete their likeness to the patriarchs. Providence had kindly bestowed upon them a son, the only child, indeed they had not desired more—they would have considered it quite an act of treason against fortune, if they had been obliged to divide their wealth among several children. Unhappily this only son, heir presumptive to so many millions, died at the university of Heidelberg of a surfeit

of sausage. At twenty he had gone to that Walhalla of Teutonic students, where they devour an unlimited amount of sausage while quaffing inexhaustible supplies of beer, and sing lieders of 300,000 verses, while they slash off the tip of each others noses. Inexorable death snatched him from his parents, when they had reached an age which precluded any chance of a successor. The old misers piously collected his wardrobe, and sold it, dúring which melancholy operation (for there was a good deal of new linen missing) M. Meiser said to his wife—

"My heart bleeds at the bare idea of our houses and our money, the fruit of our honest and dishonest transactions, passing away at our death to utter strangers. One

ought always to have a second son to fall back upon in the style of our supplementary judge in the Chamber of Commerce."

But time which is all powerful in Germany, as well as in other countries, soon showed them there is a balm for every loss excepting the loss of money. Five years after, Mme. Meiser said to her husband, with a tender and philosophical smile—

"Who can penetrate the wisdom of Providence?—our son might have brought us to ruin. Just look at Theobald Scheffler, his old comrade, he wasted twenty thousand francs upon a dancer in Paris. Even we ourselves spent more than two thousand thalers every year on the young scamp; his death is a great saving, and consequently a good thing."

While Fougas' three coffins were still in the house, the good woman used to laugh at her husband's want of appetite and sleepless nights.

"What are you thinking of," said she, "you have done nothing but kick me all night. Let us throw this wretched Frenchman into the fire; he shall no longer disturb the peace of a quiet household. We can sell the leaden coffin, it will fetch at least two hundred pounds. The white silk will make me a dress lining, and the wool used for the wadding can be converted into a good mattress."

But a remnant of superstition prevented Meiser from following his wife's advice; he took his own way of getting rid of the Colonel by selling him.

The house inhabited by this couple was the handsomest and best built in the Rue du Puits-Public, in the midst of a fine boulevard. Strong balustrades of wrought iron ornamented all the windows, and the door was plated with iron, like a knight of the olden times.

By means of a disposition of little mirrors, ingeniously reflecting each other, they could see every one who approached the house before he knocked. A general servant, who was a regular horse in the way of work, and a perfect camel for sobriety, lived under this roof favoured by the gods.

The old man-servant went home at night, which was to his own interest, as he might otherwise have yielded to the temptation

of wringing the venerable old necks of his employers.

A few books on business and theology composed the library of these old people. They would not have a garden at the back of the house, because they thought the trees might be a shelter for thieves. At eight o'clock every night, they locked and bolted their door, and never went out at all, unless absolutely obliged, for fear of meeting dishonest people.

But, on the 29th of April, 1859, at eleven in the morning, Nicholas Meiser was a long way from his beloved home, a very long way for him, this honest Dantzic citizen! He was slowly pacing, with heavy step, that promenade at Berlin spoken of in one of Alphonse Karr's novels as "Under the Limes," in German, "Unter den Linden."

What powerful motives had induced this red-faced old bird to leave his snug nest? The same which led Alexander to Babylon, Scipio to Carthage, Godfrey de Bouillon to Jerusalem, and Napoleon to Moscow—Ambition!

Meiser did not expect to have the keys of the city presented to him on a red velvet cushion, but he knew a nobleman, a chief clerk, and a waiting-maid who were endeavouring to procure him a patent of nobility. To be able to call himself Von Meiser, instead of plain Meiser, what a delightful vision! The old man possessed that mixture of servility and pride which places a lacquey at such an immeasurable distance from other men. Full of respect for power and admiration of grandeur, he pronounced the name of king, prince, and even baron,

with a tone of emphasis and unction. He rolled the sweet syllables of nobility under his tongue, and the simple word milord filled his mouth with delectable water.

These kind of temperaments are not rare in Germany, indeed, they may even be found elsewhere. If they were to be transported into a country where all men are equals, the nostalgia of servitude would kill them.

The claims brought forward in favour of Nicholas Meiser's pretensions to a title were not of the kind which immediately kicks the beam, but of those which gradually make it incline little by little. As nephew of a celebrated professor, a ratepayer and a householder, a man of orthodox views, subscriber to the *Nouvelle Gazette de la*

Croix, full of contempt for the Opposition, author of a toast against democracy, a former town councillor, a judge in the Chamber of Commerce, once a corporal in the landwehr, he was a declared enemy of Poland, and of every nation unable to assert its own rights.

The most memorable action of his life happened ten years ago, when he denounced, by an anonymous letter, a member of the Parliament of Frankfort, who had taken refuge in Dantzic.

At the time Meiser was passing up and down under the linden trees, his little transaction was going on satisfactorily; he had just been assured to that effect by his very patrons themselves. So he set off with a light step to the station of the

North Eastern Railway, without any other luggage than a revolver in his pocket. His black calf's skin trunk had been sent on before to await his arrival at the office. On his way, he cast a rapid glance on the contents of the shop windows. Hullo! Suddenly he stops before a stationer's and rubs his eyes—a sovereign remedy, they say, for dimness of sight. Between the portraits of Mme. Sand and M. Merimée, the two greatest writers in France, he perceived, divined, not to say recognised, a well-known face.

"Surely," said he, "I have seen that man before, but in a less flourishing condition. Can our old quondam lodger have come to life again? Impossible! I burnt my uncle's directions, and, thanks to me, the secret of resuscitating people is lost.

Nevertheless, there is a striking likeness! Was this portrait taken in 1813, when Colonel Fougas was living? No, for photography had not been invented at that time. But perhaps this photo was taken from a picture. Here are King Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette taken in the same way, which does not prove that Robespierre resuscitated them. All the same, it is an unlucky omen."

With a view to make some enquiry, he made a step towards the shop door, but was held back by a certain feeling of embarrassment. The question might create surprise, and raise conjecture or remark as to his motives. Forward! And so he continued his walk, stepping out, and trying to reassure himself.

"Bah! it is an hallucination—the effect

of a predominant idea; besides which, the man is dressed in the fashion of 1813, which settles it."

He arrived at the railway station, registered his luggage, and threw himself full length on the cushions of a first-class carriage. He smoked his china pipe, his two neighbours slept, and soon he followed their example, and snored. The snore of this portly man had a sinister sound about it, like a lugubrious bassoon. What vision did he see in this hour of slumber? No stranger ever knew, for he kept his dreams, like his other property, all to himself.

But half way between two stations, while the train was going at full speed, he distinctly felt two hands energetically seize him by the feet. A sensation, only too well known,

alas! and which brought back to him the most unhappy reminiscence of his life. He opened his eyes in terror, and saw the original of the photograph in the costume of the photograph!

His hair stood on end, his eyes opened as round as balls, and, with a wild shriek, he threw himself headlong between the seats amidst his fellow-travellers' legs.

A few hard kicks soon brought him to his senses; he got up as he best could, and looked about him. No one was there but the original inmates of the carriage, who were mechanically discharging the remainder of their kicks into vacancy, and rubbing their eyes assiduously. He roused them completely at last with eager interrogations concerning his recent visitor, but

these gentlemen declared they had seen no one.

Meiser's reflections took a sombre hue; he realised that his visions began to assume a terrible amount of consistency. This idea prevented his going to sleep again.

"If this goes on any longer," said he, "the Colonel's ghost will end by breaking my nose, or giving me a pair of black eyes!"

A little later, remembering he had made a very light breakfast, he thought that the nightmare might possibly be the result of undue abstinence. At the next stoppage of five minutes he got out, and ordered a basin of soup. They gave him some very hot vermicelli, and he blew into his cup like a dolphin in the Bosphorus.

A man passed by without speaking to, or even seeing him, and yet the cup fell from the hands of the rich Nicholas Meiser, and the vermicelli spread itself over his shirt and waistcoat, where it formed an elegant trellis work in the style of the architecture of the Porte St. Martin. Some yellowish threads detached from the mass hung like stalactites from the buttons of his great coat. The vermicelli remained on the surface, but the soup penetrated much further. It was as hot as you please; an egg left in it ten minutes would have been hard boiled. Fatal soup, which found its way not only into his pockets, but into the innermost recesses of the man himself. The bell rang, the waiter claimed his six-pence, and Meiser got into the carriage

again, preceded by a breast plate of vermicelli, and followed by a little stream of broth, which flowed down the undulations of his calves.

And all this because he had seen, or fancied he saw, the terrible apparition of Colonel Fougas eating sandwiches!

Oh, how weary the journey seemed to him; he longed to find himself at home again with his wife Catherine, Barbel and the servant, and all the doors securely fastened!

His fellow travellers nearly died with laughing. Ditto the people in the left compartment; also those to the right. While he was pulling off the vermicelli, the little greasy eyes of broth hardened as they came in contact with the air, and seemed to laugh

silently. What hard lines that a millionaire should be affording so much amusement to a parcel of people without a penny! He did not get out again till they reached Dantzic, and never even put his nose out of window, but consoled himself with his china pipe on which Leda was caressing a swan, and he did not laugh.

Sad, sad journey! However, he arrived at last; it was eight o'clock in the evening. The old servant was in waiting with a porter's knot to carry his master's luggage. No more alarming figures! No more mocking laughter! The story of the broth had sunk into oblivion like one of M. Keller's discourses. Arrived in the waiting-room, Meiser had already seized upon his calf-skin trunk, when he saw, at

the opposite end of the room, the apparition of Fougas, who was tugging at the other end, and seemed determined to dispute the possession of it with him. He pulled himself together, dragged at it harder than ever, and even put his hand in his left pocket, where lay his revolver.

But, fascinated by the glittering gaze of the Colonel, his legs gave way under him; he fell, and imagined he saw Fougas, and the black trunk also, fall one on the top of the other.

When he recovered his senses, his old servant was rubbing his hands, the box had been placed on a truck, and the Colonel had disappeared. The servant declared he had seen no one, and that he had received the trunk himself from the hands of the porter.

Twenty minutes later, the millionaire was in his own house, and was pressing his face joyously against the thin and very bony cheeks of his wife. He did not dare tell her of his visions, for Mme. Meiser was a strong-minded woman in her way. But she began to speak of Fougas.

"I have a regular story to relate," said she. "Will you believe it? The Berlin police have written to ask if our uncle ever bequeathed us a mummy; at what period; how long we kept it, and what we have done with it. I told the truth, adding that Colonel Fougas was in such bad condition, and so eaten by moths, that we sold him as an old rag. What have the police to do with our affairs?"

Meiser heaved a deep sigh.

"Let us talk about money matters," continued the lady. "The governor of the bank came to see me; the million that you want to-morrow is ready, and will be paid upon your signature. It appears they have had great difficulty in collecting such a large sum in crowns; if you had only been willing to take paper on Vienna or Paris, they would have been better pleased! But, at any rate, they have done as you wished; there is no news, excepting that Schmidt, the merchant, has committed suicide. He had a bill due for ten thousand thalers, and not even half that sum in his cash-box; so came to me for money, and I offered him ten thousand thalers, at twenty-five per cent., payable in twenty-four days, with first mortgage on his

premises. The fool preferred to hang himself in his shop. No accounting for taste!"

"Did he hang himself very high?"

"I know nothing about it. Why?"

"Because one might buy the piece of rope cheap, and we are likely to want it, my poor Catherine! This Colonel Fougas gives me a good deal of worry."

"What, more of your stupid fancies! Come to supper, my dear."

"Very well; let us go."

This angular Baucis led her Philemon into a large, handsome dining-room, where Barbel had served a repast worthy of the gods. Soup with balls of spiced bread, little fish-balls with black butter, balls of mutton with forcemeat, balls of game, and sauer kraut and bacon garnished with fried

potatoes, roast hare with currant jelly, a pile of cray fish, salmon from the Vistula, jellies, fruit tarts, and so forth. Six bottles of Rhine wine, from the best vintages, were awaiting, in their silver capsules, the greeting of the master.

But the lord of the feast was neither hungry nor thirsty. He barely tasted the dishes, and just touched the glass with his lips in anxious expectation of an event which very soon came to pass. A loud knock all at once reverberated through the house.

Nicholas Meiser gave a start; his wife tried to re-assure him.

"It is nothing," said she. "The governor of the bank told me he should come and speak to you. He offered to give us a

premium, if we would take bank notes instead of silver."

"It is no question of money," exclaimed the old man. "It is the devil who is coming to see us."

At the same moment, the maid-servant rushed into the room, screaming—

"Sir—madam—it is the Frenchman, come out of the three coffins, oh, Blessed Virgin!"

Fougas bowed and said—

"Good people, don't disturb yourselves, I beg. There is a little matter to be settled between us which I will explain to you in two words. You are in a hurry—so am I. You have not yet supped—neither have I."

Mme. Meiser, stiffer and thinner than

a statue of the thirteenth century, opened her large, toothless mouth. She was paralysed with fear.

The man, who was better prepared for the phantom's visit, loaded his revolver under the table, and took aim at the Colonel, crying—

"*Vade retro Satanus.*"

The exorcism and the pistol both missed fire simultaneously.

Meiser did not lose heart; he fired, one after another, the six chambers of his revolver at the demon, who stood watching his movements. Nothing came of it.

"What devil of a game are you at?" said Colonel Fougas, seating himself astride on a chair. "I never before heard of a Christian being received in this fashion."

Meiser threw down his revolver, and dragged himself like an animal up to Fougas' feet.

His wife, equally frightened, did the same. They clasped their hands, and the big man exclaimed—

"Spirit, I confess my wretched doings, and am ready to atone for them. I have been guilty towards you; I disobeyed my uncle's instructions. What do you desire of me? What are your commands? A tomb? A handsome monument?—prayers for the repose of your soul? Many prayers?"

"Idiot!" said Fougas, spurning him with his foot. "I am not a spirit, and I want nothing but the money of which you have robbed me."

Meiser still grovelled, but his gaunt

wife had already sprung to her feet, and, with her arms akimbo, defied the Colonel.

"Money!" cried she. "We don't owe you any. Have you any papers? Show us our signature first! Where should we be, I ask you, if we were to give money to every adventurer who presented himself? And if you are not a spirit, by what right have you intruded into our house? Oh, you are a man like any other, are you? You are not a spirit, then? Very well; let me tell you, sir, there are judges at Berlin, nay, even in the provinces, and we will soon see if you can lay hands on our money. Get up, you great gander—he is only a man! And you, Mr. Ghost, clear out, do you hear? Come, leave the house."

The Colonel remained immovable as a rock.

"Devil take women's tongues! Sit down, old lady, and take your fists out of my eyes; they are not as soft as they might be. As for you, bloated old fellow, sit down again, and listen to me. There will be plenty of time to go to law after, if we can't come to some understanding in the meanwhile. Law papers stink in my nostrils, and I would rather treat with you amicably."

M. and Mme. Meiser gradually recovered from their fright; like most dishonest people, they were distrustful of magistrates. If this Colonel should prove a poor wretch whom they could appease with a few thalers, it would be much better to avoid a lawsuit.

Fougas put the case to them with military frankness. He proved the evidence of his claim, related how he had established his identity at Fontainebleau, Paris, and Berlin; repeated from memory two or three passages from the will, and ended by declaring that both the Prussian and French Governments were ready to unite if necessary in helping him to obtain his rights.

"You know very well," added he, seizing Meiser by the button-hole, "that I am not a shuffling old fox of a lawyer. If you were only strong enough to wield a sword we would go upon the ground arm in arm to fight, and I would play you for the sum in three points as true as you smell of soup."

"Happily, sir," said Meiser, "my age

is a protection against such brutality; you would not wish to trample on the corpse of an old man."

"Venerable old scoundrel! but you would have thought nothing of shooting me like a dog, if your pistol had not hung fire."

"It was not loaded, Colonel; it was—scarcely loaded at all. But I am an accommodating individual, and we may be able to come some arrangement. I owe you nothing, and besides, there is a clause—however—how much do you want?"

"That is your say, is it?—now for mine."

The old rascal's accomplice softened the tones of her voice; just imagine, if you can, a saw licking a tree before cutting it down.

"Listen, Claus, listen to what Colonel Fougas is going to say. You will soon see how sensible he is. He would never dream of bringing ruin upon poor people like ourselves. Good Heavens! No! he would be incapable of that—he has such a noble heart—he is such a disinterested man! An officer of the great Napoleon (peace be to his soul!)"

"That's enough, old lady," said Fougas with an energetic gesture, which nipped this discourse in the bud. "They made out for me at Berlin the sum which is owing to me, capital and interest included."

"Interest!" cried Meiser. "But in what country or latitude has interest ever been paid? In trade, perhaps, but between friends never, oh, never! My good Colonel,

what would my poor uncle say, looking down upon us from heaven at this moment, if he knew that you claimed the interest of his property?"

"Hold your tongue, Nickle," remonstrated his wife. "The Colonel has just told you himself that he did not intend to ask for the interest."

"In the name of a gun! will you be silent, you two magpies! I am dying with hunger, and I did not bring my nightcap with me, to sleep here. The matter is this, you owe me a good deal, but it is not a round sum, and I hate fractions; I am all for even money, besides which, my wants are moderate. I have enough for my wife and myself; all I need is a provision for my son."

"All right," cried Meiser. "I promise

to take charge of the boy and see to his education."

"Ever since I have once more become a citizen of the world within the last ten days, there is one word I hear on all sides. At Berlin as in Paris, every one talks of millions; they seem to think of nothing else, and every man's mouth is full of millions. From constantly hearing of it I am longing to know what it is. So go fetch me a million, and I will give you a receipt in full."

If you wish to form any idea of the heartrending cries which succeeded this speech, go to the Jardin des Plantes at the hour when they feed the birds of prey, and try to snatch the meat from them.

Fougas turned a deaf ear, and stuck to his original text.

Prayers, arguments, lies, flatteries, evasions, fell unheeded, and slipped off him like water off a duck's back.

But at ten o'clock, seeing no prospect of coming to an understanding, he took up his hat.

"Good night," said he, it "is not one million that I shall ask for now, but two millions, and the remainder; we will go to law. Now I am off to supper."

He was already on the stairs, when Mme. Meiser said to her husband—

"Call him back, and give him his million."

"Are you mad?"

"No, don't be alarmed."

"Oh, I really could not!"

"Good gracious, what fools men are! Sir, Colonel Fougas, come up again, I beg of you; we consent to everything you ask."

"By Jove!" replied he, returning, "you should have made up your minds before, but come, let us see the money!"

Mme. Meiser explained in her most dulcet tones, that poor capitalists like themselves did not keep so large a sum in their cash-box.

"But you shall lose nothing by that, my dear sir. To-morrow you shall have the amount, in good coin of the realm; my husband is going to give you a cheque for it on the Royal Bank of Dantzic."

"But," protested the unfortunate Meiser, signing the cheque all the same, for he had unbounded confidence in Catherine's practical genius. The old woman begged Fougas to sit down at the foot of the table, and dictated to him a receipt for two

millions as an acknowledgment in full. You may be sure she did not leave out a single word of legal formula, and that it was in strict accordance with the Prussian code. The receipt, made out entirely in the Colonel's writing, filled three whole pages.

He signed the document with a flourish to his name, and received in exchange Nicholas' signature, which he knew to be valid.

"Decidedly," said he to the old man, "you are not such an Arab as they represented you at Berlin. Shake hands, old cheat! I only give my hand to honest people as a rule, but on an occasion like this, one may allow oneself a little extra license."

"Do still more, Colonel Fougas," said Mme. Meiser, with humility, "share our modest repast!"

"Thanks, old lady, I won't refuse. My supper at the inn of La Cloche must be quite cold by this time, and your dishes still smoking on the hot-water plates have more than once already disturbed the even tenour of my ideas. Besides which, Fougas would have no objection to play a tune on those slender yellow glasses."

The respectable Catherine ordered a place to be laid for the Colonel, and told Barbel she might go to bed. The Colonel folded in eight Meiser's cheque for a million, placed it carefully midst a roll of bank notes, and put the whole in the pocket-book his dear Clementina had sent him.

Eleven o'clock was then striking; at half-past eleven Fougas began to see the world through rose-coloured glasses. He was loud in his praises of the Rhine wine, and thanked the Meisers cordially for their hospitality. At mid-night he esteemed them, at a quarter past he embraced them, and at half-past he sang the praises of John Meiser, his benefactor and his friend. When he learnt that John Meiser had died in that very house, he shed a torrent of tears; at a quarter to one he became confidential, and spoke of the son whom he hoped to make happy, and of the betrothed who was awaiting him. At one o'clock he tasted some famous port wine which Mme. Meiser went herself to fetch from the cellar. Half-past one found him thick of

speech, and his eyes heavy with drowsiness; he struggled for some time against inebriety and sleep, told them he was going to relate the story of the Russian campaign, murmured the Emperor's name, and finally slid under the table.

"You may believe me or not, as you like," said Mme. Meiser to her husband, "it is not a man who has entered this house, but the very old gentleman himself."

"The old gentleman!"

"Otherwise, do you think I should have advised you to give him that million. I heard a voice saying to me, 'If you don't give that million to Satan's messenger, you will both die this night;' it was then I called him upstairs again. Ah, if we had to do with a man only, I should have ad-

vised you to dispute this claim to your last penny!"

"That's right, and now will you laugh again at my visions?"

"Pardon me, dear Claus, I was mad."

"And I had ended by believing him."

"Poor innocent, perhaps you also believed it was really Colonel Fougas?"

"Faith! I did indeed."

"As if it were possible to resuscitate a man! A demon, I tell you, who has taken the form of the Colonel on purpose to rob us of our money."

"But what can demons want with money?"

"How do I know? Perhaps they build cathedrals!"

"But how can one recognise a demon in disguise?"

"First by his cloven foot—but then he has boots on—then by his broken ear, which has been mended."

"You don't say so—what for?"

"Why, because the devil has pointed ears, and to make them round he is obliged to have them cut."

Meiser leant under the table, and uttered a cry of alarm.

"It really is indeed the devil," said he, "but how has he allowed himself to fall asleep?"

"Did you not notice that in returning from the cellar, I went into my bedroom. I put a drop of holy water into the port wine, charm and counter charm! and he has succumbed."

"How fortunate! But what shall we do with him now that he is powerless?"

"What did they do in former times? Were the devils not cast into the sea?"

"The sea is so far off!"

"But, great baby! the public well is close by."

"And what will be said to-morrow when they find his body?"

"They will find nothing at all, and even this very paper which we have made him sign will be changed to a dry leaf to-morrow."

Ten minutes later M. and Mme. Meiser swung a heavy body over the top of the well, and Mme. Catherine murmured in a loud voice the following incantation—

"Demon, child of darkness, be accursed! Demon, child of darkness, depart from us!

Demon, child of darkness, return to the lower regions!"

A muffled sound, the noise of a body falling into the water completed the ceremony, and the two accomplices re-entered their house with all the satisfaction of having done a praiseworthy action. Nicholas said to himself—

"I never thought she was so superstitious!"

"I never knew he was so simple," said Kittle, the lawful wife of Claus.

They slept the sleep of the innocent; ah, how much less soft their pillow would have been, had they known that Colonel Fougas had gone home with his million all safe.

At ten o'clock in the morning, while they

were taking their coffee and buttered rolls, the governor of the Bank called and said to them—

"I am come to thank you for having accepted a draft on Paris instead of the million in money, and without premium. That young Frenchman you sent us is rather off-hand perhaps, but a lively and good-natured fellow."





CHAPTER V.

THE COLONEL TRIES TO GET RID OF A MILLION WHICH HE FINDS IN THE WAY.

Fougas left Paris for Berlin the day after his audience with the Emperor. He took three days to perform the journey, as he stayed some time at Nancy.

The Marshal had given him a letter of introduction to the Prefect of La Meurthe, who received him very kindly, and promised him every assistance in his search. Unfortunately, the house where he had loved and lived with Clementina Pichon was no longer in existence. It had been

pulled down by order of the Corporation, in 1807, to make an opening for a new street.

It is true the ediles had not demolished the family with the house; but a fresh difficulty arose on that score, for the name of Pichon was legion in the town, the suburbs, and the whole department.

Amid this multitude of Pichons, Fougas was at a loss whom to embrace. At last, weary of the search, and eager to fly and meet fortune half way, he left a note in the hands of the Commissary of Police—

"To look through the registers and elsewhere for the name of a young girl called Clementina Pichon. In 1813 she was eighteen years of age, and her parents kept a boarding-house for officers in the army. If

she still lives, to ascertain her address; if dead, to enquire for her heirs—the happiness of a father depends on this."

On arriving at Berlin, the Colonel found his reputation had already preceded him. A letter from the Minister of War had been forwarded to the Prussian Government by the French Legation.

Léon Rénault, in spite of his grief, had found time to write a few lines to Dr. Hirtz; the newspapers began to make comments on the case, and the learned societies to bestir themselves.

The Prince Regent condescended to interrogate his physician on the subject, for Germany is a curious country, where science creates an interest even in the minds of Princes.

Fougas, who had read the letter that Dr. Hirtz had annexed to the will of Dr. Meiser, thought it would be only right for him to go and thank the good man. He paid him a visit and embraced him, calling him the oracle of Epidaurus.

The Doctor took possession of him, made him send for his luggage from the hotel, and gave him the best room in the house.

Until the 29th of the month the Colonel was petted as a friend and exhibited as a phenomenon. Seven photographers disputed the honour of depicting so great a man; the cities of Greece did no more for poor old Homer.

His Royal Highness the Prince Regent desired to see him, and begged M. Hirtz to bring him to the Palace.

Fougas hung back at first and pretended that a soldier ought not to be on friendly terms with the enemy of his country; evidently, he thought himself still in the year 1813.

The Prince is a distinguished officer, who commanded in person at the famous siege of Rastadt. He enjoyed the piquant conversation of Feugas. The ingenious simplicity of this young grumbler delighted him. He paid him a great many compliments, and said that the Emperor of the French was very lucky to possess officers of so much merit around him.

"He has not many of them," replied the Colonel. "If there were only four or five hundred of my metal your Europe would have been bagged long ago."

This answer seemed more amusing than threatening, and the strength of the Prussian army was not augmented in consequence that day.

His Royal Highness informed Fougas himself that his indemnity had been fixed at two hundred and fifty thousand francs, and that he might claim this sum at the Treasury whenever it suited him to do so.

"Your Highness," said he, "it is always pleasant to pocket money belonging to an en—— a stranger. But come, I am not a thuriferary of Plutus, only give me back the Rhine and Posen and I will cry quits."

"Do you know what you are saying?" said the Prince, laughing—"the Rhine and Posen!"

"The Rhine belongs to France, and Posen to Poland, much more strictly than this money to me. But you great people are all alike; you go out of your way to pay your small debts, and make it a point of honour to repudiate the great ones."

The Prince made a grimace, and the countenances of those around him assumed the same expression. It was universally thought that M. Fougas had failed in tact in allowing this crumb of truth to fall into his dish of nonsense.

But a pretty little Viennese baroness, who had assisted at the presentation, was much more struck by his handsome face than scandalized by his conversation. The Viennese ladies have a great reputation for hospitality, which they take care to merit

not only at home, but even in other countries.

The Baroness de Marcomarcus had another reason for making herself agreeable to the Colonel. For two or three years past she had been making a collection of celebrated men—photographically, of course!

Her album was filled with the portraits of generals, statesmen, philosophers, and pianists, who had given themselves to her with this inscription underneath: "In respectful homage." There might be found among them several Roman Catholic prelates, and even a celebrated cardinal; but as yet a ghost was wanting.

She therefore wrote Fougas a note brimming over with impatience and curiosity, inviting him to sup with her.

Fougas, who had decided to leave the next day for Dantzic, took a large sheet of ruled paper and began to excuse himself politely. He was afraid, this man of tender and chivalrous feeling, that an evening of pleasant converse, spent in the society of one of the prettiest women in Germany, might be a moral infidelity to the memory of Clementina. He racked his brain to find a proper form of apology, and began thus:—

"Too indulgent beauty, I—" but the muse refused to inspire him further. He was not in the humour to write; he felt more inclined to sup.

His scruples vanished like clouds driven before a north-east wind; he put on his frogged great-coat, and answered the invitation in person.

It was the first supper he had eaten since his resuscitation, and he gave proof of an excellent appetite, drinking rather too much, though not as deeply as usual.

The Baroness, astonished at his cleverness, wit, and unflagging spirits, kept him with her as long as possible, and even now, when showing the Colonel's picture to her friends, she says—

"The French are the only soldiers fit to conquer the world."

The next day he strapped up his calf-skin trunk that he had bought in Paris, claimed his money at the Treasury, and set out for Dantzic.

He slept in the railway carriage, after the supper of the previous night, until a terrible snore awoke him. Looking round for the culprit, and not finding him in his

compartment, he opened the door of the adjoining one—for the German carriages are much more convenient than ours—and forcibly shook a big man whose body might have been a receptacle for all the barrels of an organ. At one of the stations he drank a whole bottle of Marsala, and ate two dozen sandwiches, because the supper of the night before had left an internal vacuum.

At Dantzic he rescued his black trunk from the hands of a big thief who was just going to take possession of it.

He was shown to the best hotel in the town, ordered his supper, and then rushed off to find the house of M. and Mme. Meiser.

His friends at Berlin had given him sun-

dry indications respecting these charming people. He was quite aware that he would have to deal with the richest and stingiest of rogues—this is why he adopted that cavalier tone which may, perhaps, have surprised some of my readers in the preceding chapter.

Unhappily, he softened a little too much when he had his million safely in his pocket. His curiosity to explore the bottom of those long-necked bottles nearly upset him. His mind must have wandered towards one o'clock in the morning, if we may believe the story he tells about it. He declared that after having said good-night to the excellent couple who had treated him so hospitably he fell into a large deep well, whose margin being very little above the

level of the street, ought at least to have had the distinction of a lamp. "I awoke," he says, "to find myself in the midst of a pool of very cold water which tasted excellent.

"After swimming for two or three minutes, vainly seeking some coign of vantage, I seized a thick rope and drew myself up with ease to land, which was only about forty feet above me. You only need a good pair of wrists and a knowledge of gymnastics; it is no special feat.

"Jumping on the pavement, I found myself confronted with a species of night-watch, who was bawling the hour in the streets, and who insolently asked me what I was doing there. I knocked him down for his impertinence, and this little exercise

put my blood in circulation, and did me good.

"Before returning to the inn, I stopped under a gas-lamp, opened my pocket-book, and saw with delight that my draft for a million was not wet. The leather was thick and the clasp secure, besides which I had wrapped up M. Meiser's cheque in half-a-dozen bank notes of a hundred francs, which were greasy as a monk—this had preserved my treasure."

Having realised this fact, he went home, retired to bed, and slept soundly. The next day he received the following letter from the police at Nancy:—

"Clementina Pichon, aged eighteen, youngest daughter of Augustus Pichon, hotel keeper, and of Léonie Francelot, his

wife, married, in this town, the 11th January, 1814, Louis Antoine Langevin, of no profession.

"The name of Langevin is as rare in this department as that of Pichon is common. Excepting the Honble. Victor Langevin, Councillor of the Prefecture, at Nancy, we know only one other Langevin, Pierre, commonly called Pierrot, a miller, of the Commune of Vergaville, in the canton of Dieuze."

Fougas leapt up to the ceiling, exclaiming—

"I have a son!"

Calling up the master of the hotel, he said to him—

"Make out my bill, and send my luggage to the railway station. Take my ticket

for Nancy; I shall not stop anywhere on the road. Here are two hundred francs, which I give you that you may drink my son's health! He is called Victor, after me! He is a Councillor of the Prefecture! I would have preferred a soldier, but no matter! First of all, drive me to the bank. I must get the million which belongs to him."

As there is no direct line between Dantzic and Nancy, he was obliged to stop at Berlin. Dr. Hirtz, who saw him in passing through, informed him that the learned societies of the town had prepared a sumptuous banquet in his honour. Fougas refused point blank.

"It is not," said he, "that I disdain an opportunity of drinking in good company,

but Nature will be heard; her voice leads me on. The sweetest intoxication to every well-constituted mind is that of parental love!"

By way of preparing his dear child in some measure for the joy his unexpected return was likely to cause him, he put his cheque for a million into an envelope, addressed to M. Victor Langevin, with a long letter, which ended thus—

"A father's blessing is of more value than all the gold in the world.

"Victor Fougas."

Clementina's fickleness rather hurt his self-esteem, but he soon got over that.

"At least," thought he, "I shall not be obliged to marry an old woman, when there is a young one awaiting me at Fontaine-

bleau. And then—my son has a very presentable name after all. Fougas is much better, but Langevin is not so very bad."

He arrived on the 2nd of September, at six in the evening, in this grand, but somewhat dull, town, which is the Versailles of Lorraine. His heart beat with emotion; to give himself strength, he made a good dinner, and the landlord, whom he questioned during dessert, gave him the most satisfactory information respecting M. Langevin, a man still young, married within the last six years, with one son and one daughter, esteemed in the country, and in good circumstances.

"I was sure of that," said Fougas.

He poured himself out a libation of a

certain kirsch of the Black Forest, which seemed to him delicious with maccaroons.

That evening, M. Langevin related to his wife that on returning from his club, at ten o'clock, he had been brutally accosted by a drunken man. At first he took him for a thief, and prepared to defend himself, but the man, after embracing him, took to his heels, and fled. This curious incident was the subject of various conjectures, each more improbable than the other, on the part of the husband and wife, but both being young and lively people, they soon changed the subject of conversation.

The next day Fougas, laden with bonbons, presented himself at M. Langevin's door. In order to gain a welcome from his grandchildren, he had taken the pick of

Lebègue's celebrated shop, who is the Boissier of Nancy. The servant who opened the door asked if he were the gentleman her master expected.

"All right," said he. "Then my letter has arrived?"

"Yes, sir, yesterday morning. Have you any luggage?"

"I left it at the hotel."

"Monsieur will be vexed. Your room is all ready."

"Thanks, thanks, thanks. Here's a bank note for a hundred francs for you, for giving me such good news."

"Oh, sir, there is no necessity!"

"But where is he? I must see him, embrace him, tell him—"

"He is dressing, sir, and madame, too."

"And the children? My dear little grandchildren?"

"If you would like to see them, they are in the dining-room."

"Of course I should like. Open the door, quick!"

He fancied the little boy resembled himself, and was delighted to find him in an artillery uniform, wearing a sabre. He emptied his pockets on the floor, and the children, at the sight of so many good things, clung round his neck.

"Oh, philosophers," cried the Colonel, "will you dare deny the voice of Nature?"

A pretty little woman (all the young women at Nancy are pretty) ran in, when she heard the joyous exclamations of her offspring.

"My daughter-in-law," cried Fougas, opening his arms.

The mistress of the house prudently stepped back, and with an arch smile, said—

"You are mistaken, sir. I am neither yours, by law nor nature. I am Mme. Langevin."

"How stupid I am," thought the Colonel. "I was just going to blurt out before these children all our family secrets. Manners, Fougas! You are in good society, where the ardour of the sweetest sentiments hides itself under the icy mask of indifference."

"Pray be seated," said Mme. Langevin. "I hope you have had a pleasant journey?"

"Yes, madam, excepting that the train seemed to me very slow."

"I did not know you were in such a hurry to get here."

"Can't you understand that I was burning with impatience to be here?"

"So much the better. It is a proof that at last you have listened to reason and the persuasions of your family."

"Was it my fault, if my family was so long in speaking?"

"What is of most importance is that you have listened; we will try to prevent your being dull at Nancy."

"How could that be possible, as long as I remain in the midst of you?"

"Thanks; our house shall be your home. Understand that you are to be quite one of the family."

"Both in heart and soul, madam."

"And you will no longer think of Paris?"

"Paris! I despise it as much as the year '40."

"But I must inform you that here it is not the custom to fight duels."

"What, you already know?"

"We know everything, even to that famous supper with certain ladies."

"How the devil did you learn all this? But, really, that time I was not to blame—"

M. Langevin now appeared in his turn, clean shaved and ruddy—a fine type of a *sous-préfet in futuro.*

"Admirable," thought Fougas, "how well we keep our looks in my family! You would never say that fellow was more than thirty-five, and he must be forty-six if he

is a day. By the way he is not at all like me, he favours his mother!"

"My dear," said Mme. Langevin, "here is a naughty boy who promises to be good."

"Welcome, young man," said the Councillor, as he shook hands with Fougas.

This greeting seemed cold to our poor hero; he had dreamt of a shower of kisses and tears, and his children contented themselves by shaking hands with him.

"My ch—, sir," said he to M. Langevin, "there is still one person wanting to complete our family circle. Certain mutual wrongs, effaced by time, ought not to create an insurmountable barrier between us. May I be allowed to ask if you will introduce me to your mother?"

M. Langevin and his wife stared with astonishment.

"Really, sir," said the husband, "Paris life must have impaired your memory. My poor mother is dead! We lost her three years ago!"

Fougas burst into tears.

"I beg your pardon," faltered he. "I did not know—poor lady!"

"I don't understand you—did you know my mother?"

"Ingrate!"

"Queer kind of fellow you are! Surely your parents received a proper announcement?"

"What parents?"

"Your father and mother."

"Pooh! what nonsense is this you are

talking? my mother died before yours came into the world."

"Your mother is dead do you say?"

"Yes, faith, in 1789."

"What do you mean? did not your mother send you here?"

"No, I was led here by my paternal love."

"Paternal love! then you are not Jamin's son, who made a fool of himself in Paris, and who has been sent to Nancy to attend the lectures of the Woods and Forests Schools?"

The Colonel, in a voice worthy of Jupiter Tonans, replied—

"I am Fougas!"

"Well, and then?"

"If nature does not make your heart

throb, ungrateful son that you are, then I refer you to your mother's memory."

"By Jove!" said the Councillor, "we may carry on for ever this game of cross purposes. Sit down there, if you please, and tell me what your business is—Marie, take the children away."

Fougas needed no pressing, he related the romance of his life, omitting nothing but with extreme delicacy, so as not to hurt the filial feelings of M. Langevin, who listened patiently to the whole, like a man not the least interested in the matter.

"Sir," said he, "at first I took you for a madman, now I remember to have read in the papers some of the incidents of your history, and I perceive you are the victim of a mistake. I am not forty-six years old,

but thirty-four. My mother's name was not Clementina Pichon, but Marie Kerval. She was born at Vannes, not Nancy, and in 1813 she was only seven years old. And now I have the honour to wish you good morning!"

"Ah! you are not my son," cried Fougas, in an explosion of anger, "so much the worse for you. It is not every one who can claim a father of the name of Fougas. As to the name of Langevin, you may pick any amount of them out of the gutter! I know of one—true he is not a Councillor of the Prefecture, who puts on an embroidered coat to go to church—but he is a good honest fellow, and is called Pierre, like me! Excuse my mentioning it, but when you turn people out of doors, you should at least restore what belongs to them."

"Certainly, don't let me prevent you picking up the bon-bons my children have scattered on the floor!"

"Bon-bons indeed! it is my million that I want."

"What million?"

"Your brother's million—no, that's not it—the million of him who is not your brother. Clementina's son, my dear and only child, the only scion of my race—Pierre Langevin, commonly called Pierrot, a miller at Vergaville."

"I swear to you, sir, that I possess no million either belonging to you or to any other person."

"How dare you deny it, rascal, when I sent it to you myself through the post?"

"Possibly you may have sent it, but I most certainly have not received it."

"Well then, defend yourself!"

With this he seized M. Langevin by the throat, and in all probability France would that day have lost one of her public officials, if the servant had not entered at that moment with two letters in her hand. Fougas instantly recognised his own handwriting and the Berlin stamp, tore open the letter, and showed the cheque on the Bank of Berlin.

"There," said he, "is the million that I intended to give you, had you been my son! Now it is too late for you to retract. Nature calls me to Vergaville. Your servant!"

On the 4th of September, Pierre Langevin of Vergaville, celebrated the wedding of Cadet Langevin his second son. The

miller's family was numerous, respectable, and fairly well off. First there was the grandfather, a solid old fellow, who took his four meals like a man, and cured all his ailments with the wines of Bar or of Thiancourt. The grandmother, Catherine, had been pretty in her day, and rather gay, but now she was stone deaf by way of expiation for having listened to too many lovers in her youth. Pierre Langevin, called sometimes Pierrot, sometimes big Peter, after having tried his fortune in America (rather a common habit in that country) had returned to his native village like a shorn sheep, and heaven knows the stories that were told of his misadventures. The inhabitants of Lorraine delight in quizzing; if you don't understand a joke,

take my advice and never go into their neighbourhood. Big Peter, stung to the quick, and vexed at having squandered his patrimony, borrowed money at ten per cent., bought the mill at Vergaville, worked like a cart horse, and soon recouped both principal and interest. Dame Fortune, who owed him some compensation, liberally bestowed upon him free, gratis, for nothing, half a dozen splendid labourers, six big fine boys, whom his wife presented him with every year as regularly as a piece of clock work. Every year after the *fête* of Vergaville, Claudine had one ready for baptism. Unfortunately she died after the birth of the sixth, from having eaten four large pieces of christening cake while still in her bed. Big Peter never married again,

he had workmen enough, and he increased his wealth by degrees. But as village jokes are long-lived, the miller's friends often twitted him about that famous million which he did not bring back from America, and big Peter got as angry, and flushed up under his mask of flour as quickly as in the old days.

On the 4th September, then, as I before mentioned, his second son was married to a bouncing woman from Altroff with fat purple cheeks, which is a style of beauty much affected in that part of the country. The wedding festivities took place at the mill, seeing the bride was an orphan, and that she had only just come out of a convent at Molsheim.

It was announced to Pierre Langevin

that a gentleman, wearing the red ribbon of the Legion of Honour, wished to speak to him, and Fougas appeared in all his glory.

"My good gentleman," said the miller, "I am not exactly in the mood to discuss business, as we have just been drinking some white wine before going to church, but at dinner we shall have plenty of red wine, and, if you are disposed to make one of us, don't stand on ceremony. The table is long—we can talk afterwards—you don't refuse?—then it is settled."

"This time," thought Fougas, "I am not mistaken. Surely it is the voice of Nature! I would have preferred a soldier, but this honest, out-spoken agriculturist touches my heart. I shall not be his

debtor in the way of any satisfaction to my pride, but no matter—I possess his friendship!"

Dinner was served, and the table was more loaded with viands than Gargantua's stomach. Big Peter, as proud of his large family as of his little fortune, went through the enumeration of his sons to the Colonel, who felt highly gratified to learn that he had six well-grown grandchildren.

They had placed him on the right of a little bent old woman, whom they presented to him as the grandmother of these young fellows!

Good Heavens! how changed Clementina appeared to him. Except her eyes, which retained all their fire, there remained no trace of her former beauty.

"This is what I should have been to-day," thought Fougas, "if that good Dr. Meiser had not dried me up."

He smiled cunningly as he looked at grandfather Langevin, the putative head of this large family.

"Poor old man," murmured Fougas, "you don't know how much you owe me."

Dinner is a noisy affair at a village wedding. This is an abuse which I hope civilization will never reform. Under cover of the tumult, the Colonel attempted a conversation with his neighbour.

"Clementina," said he.

She raised her eyes, and even her nose, and said—

"Yes, sir."

"Then my heart has not deceived me; you are indeed my Clementina?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you recognise me, good and excellent woman?"

"Yes, sir."

"But how were you able to conceal your emotion? women are strong indeed! I fall as if from the skies in the midst of your peaceful existence and you are able to see me without moving an eyelid."

"Yes, sir."

"Have you forgiven me the apparent crime for which really fate alone was to blame?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thanks, oh thanks. What a charming family you have around you! That good Peter, who received me with open arms, is my son, is he not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Rejoice, then; he will be rich. Happiness he already possesses. I bring him a fortune—a whole million will be his portion. What delight, O Clementina! in this simple assemblage when I lift up my voice and say to my son, 'Here, this million is thine.' Has that moment arrived? shall I speak? shall I tell everything?"

"Yes, sir."

Upon this, Fougas rose and begged for silence. Every one thought he was going to sing a song, and they all held their tongues.

"Pierre Langevin," said he, with emphasis, "I have come back from another world, and I bring you a million."

Though big Peter would not get into a

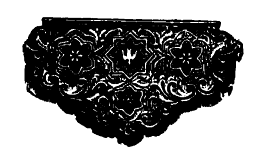
rage, he could not help getting red at what he considered a sorry jest of doubtful taste. But when Fougas announced that he had been in love with the grandmother in her youth, the old grandfather Langevin did not hesitate to throw a bottle at his head. The Colonel's son, his splendid grandsons, and even the bride herself, sprang to their feet in anger, and a fierce battle ensued.

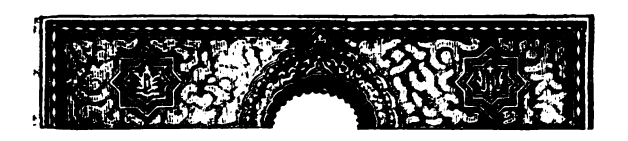
For the first time in his life, Fougas was not the strongest of the party; he was afraid of blinding some members of his family, and this paternal sentiment robbed him of half his strength.

But having found out by chance in the *melée* that Clementina was called Catherine, and that Pierre Langevin was born

in 1810, he resumed his energy, bunged up one or two eyes, broke an arm, spoilt two noses, knocked out at least four dozen teeth, and regained his carriage, with all the honours of war.

"Hang children!" muttered he, driving post haste to the Avricourt Station, "if I really have a son, let him find me out."





CHAPTER VI.

HE ASKS FOR, AND GIVES AWAY THE HAND OF CLEMENTINA.

On the 5th of September, ten o'clock in the morning found Léon Rénault, thin, wretched, and hardly recognisable at the feet of Clementina Sambuco in her aunt's drawing-room. There were flowers on the mantelpiece, flowers in all the stands. Two saucy sunbeams had found their way through the open window, and a thousand little silvery motes were playing in the sunlight, disporting themselves, and crossing each other

like the ideas in a volume of M. Alfred Houssaye's.

In the garden, the apples were falling, the peaches were ripe, wasps were scooping deep holes in the duchess pears, the bignonias and clematis were in full force, and last, but not least, a magnificent basket of heliotrope was exhaling all its glory under the left window.

The sun was gilding the trellis of grapes with a golden brown, and the yucca on the lawn, tossed by the wind like a Chinese hat, was noiselessly shaking its silvery bells. But Léon looked paler and more faded than the boughs of the lilac, more beaten down than the leaves of the old cherry tree; his heart, devoid of joy and hope, was like a gooseberry bush that has neither foliage nor fruit.

After having expatriated himself from his native land, lived for three years under inhospitable skies, spent so many days at the bottom of the mines, so many nights stretched on a porcelain stove in company more numerous than pleasant, of vermin and mougiks, after all this, to find himself set aside for a Colonel valued at twenty-five louis, whom he had resuscitated himself by steeping him in water!

Every man has gone through some sort of deception, but surely no one had ever experienced so unforeseen and remarkable a misfortune. Léon was well aware that this world is not a valley of chocolate cream or potage *à la reine*; he was acquainted with the roll of illustrious sufferers, beginning with Abel, done to death

in the terrestrial Paradise, and ending with the massacre of Reubens in the gallery of the Louvre in Paris. But history, which instructs us seldom, consoles us never; the poor engineer vainly told himself that thousands of other men had been supplanted on the very eve of their marriage, and hundreds on the day after; sorrow got the better of reason, and three or four stray hairs began to grow grey on his temples.

"Clementina," murmured he, "I am the most wretched man in creation. In refusing me the hand you had already promised, you condemn me to undergo an agony a hundred times worse than death. Alas! What is to become of me without you? I must end by living alone, for I love you too much ever to marry another

woman. For four years past all my affection, all my thoughts have centred in you ; I have got into the way of thinking of all other women as inferior beings, quite unworthy of attracting a man's notice. I will say nothing of the efforts I have made to become worthy of you, they had their own reward, and I was only too happy in working and enduring hardships for your sake. But just look at the misery in which your desertion plunges me ! A sailor cast on a desert island is less to be pitied than I am ; I shall be obliged to live near you, to hear you, to witness another's bliss, to see you pass under my windows, leaning on the arm of my rival ! Ah, death would be preferable to this daily torment ! But I have not even the right to die, my poor

parents have already so much to bear. What would it be, good heavens! should I condemn them to mourn a son?"

This lamentation, interrupted by sighs and tears, nearly broke Clementina's heart. The poor girl wept too, for she loved Léon with all her strength, but had forbidden herself to tell him so. More than once, seeing him half fainting before her, she was tempted to throw her arms round his neck, but the recollection of Fougas paralysed all her tender impulses.

"My poor friend," said she to him, "you misjudge me if you think me insensible to your grief. I have known you, Léon, from my infancy, I know all the loyalty, the delicacy of feeling, the noble and precious virtues you possess. From the time

when you used to carry me in your arms to the poor, and yourself put a penny into my hand to teach me to give alms, I have never heard of a charitable action without instantly thinking of you. When you fought with a boy twice your own size, who had taken away my doll, I felt how noble a thing courage was, and how happy a woman must feel who had a brave man to protect her. Every action of yours since then has served to augment my esteem and sympathy. Believe me it is neither unkindness nor ingratitude on my part which makes you suffer thus to-day. Alas! I no longer belong to myself, I am under control, I resemble those automata which move without knowing why or wherefore. Yes, I feel within me a some-

thing more powerful than my liberty, and it is the will of another that guides me."

"If I were only sure you would be happy! But no, this man for whom you are sacrificing me, will never understand the worth of a refined mind like yours; he is a brute, a regular trooper—a drunkard."

"Pray, Léon! remember he is entitled, at any rate, to all my respect."

"Respect—he! and why? I ask you in heaven's name, what do you see so respectable in the person of Fougas? His age? Why he is younger than I am; his talents? he only shows them at table; his education? a fine one indeed! His virtues? I know very well what to think of his gratitude and delicacy."

"I have respected him, Léon, ever since

I saw him lying in his coffin. It is a feeling that overpowers every other; I can't account for it, but it takes possession of me."

"Very well, respect him as much as you like, give way to the superstition that dominates you. Look upon him as a miraculous sacred being preserved from the jaws of death to accomplish something great upon earth! But this of itself, my dear Clementina, ought to act as a barrier between you and him, if Fougas is beyond the pale of humanity, if he is a phenomenon, a being set apart, a hero, a demi-god, a fetish, surely you cannot seriously think of ever becoming his wife! I am only a man like any other, born to work, to suffer and to love. I love you, my darling; oh, Clementina, can you not return my love?"

"Scamp!" cried Fougas, throw
the door. Clementina gave a screa
rose quickly to his feet, but th
had already seized him in his arr
engineer was lifted in the air,
like an atom in the sun rays,
thrown violently into the midd
heliotropes, before he had time
single word. Poor Léon! Poor he

In less than a second, the y
was on his feet again; he shoo
earth which had soiled his knees a
drew near the window, and sai
but steady voice—

"Colonel Fougas, I regret sin
I ever restored you to life, but th
I then committed may not p
irreparable; we shall meet a

As to you, mademoiselle, again I repeat, I love you."

The Colonél shrugged his shoulders and knelt down before the young girl on the very cushion which still bore the impress of Léon Rénault. Mdlle. Virginie de Sambuco, drawn to the spot by the commotion, came down on them like an avalanche, and overheard the following harangue—

"Idol of a noble heart! Fougas returns to thee like the eagle to his eyrie. I have been rushing all over the world in pursuit of rank, wealth, and family, burning to lay them all at your feet. Fortune has been my slave; she knows in what school I learnt to govern her. I have traversed Paris and Germany like a victorious meteor

guided by its star. I have treated the highest powers as my equals, and have made the trumpet of Truth resound under the roof of kings. I have trampled upon base cupidity, and rescued from it, at least in part, the treasures it had stolen from too confiding honour. One single blessing is denied me, the son whom I had hoped to see, escapes the lynx-eyed love of a father. Nor did I find the former object of my first affections; but, what matter? I shall regret nothing, if only you will make up to me for all the rest. What are we waiting for?—are you still deaf to the voice of that happiness which calls you? Let us fly to the temple of the law, you shall then follow me to the altar, a priest shall bless our vows, and we will go through

life leaning on each other. I—like the oak which is the support of weakness, thou like the graceful ivy which adorns the emblem of vigour."

Clementina remained some time without speaking, as if bewildered by the Colonel's boisterous eloquence.

"M. Fougas," said she, "I have always obeyed you hitherto. I promise to obey you all my life. If you don't wish me to marry Léon, I will give him up. I love him, however, and one single word from his lips stirs my heart more than all the grand speeches you have made me."

"Good—very good," cried the aunt. "For my part, sir, though you have not done me the honour of consulting me, allow me to tell you what I think. My niece is

not at all the wife to suit you; were you richer than M. de Rothschild, and more illustrious than the Duke of Malakoff, I would never advise Clementina to marry you."

"And why not, oh, most chaste Minerva?"

"Because you would love her for a fortnight, and at the first sound of the cannon, off you would go to the war! You would abandon her, sir, like that poor Clementina of whose misfortunes we have heard."

"Forsooth, madam, she was not so much to be pitied—why three months after Leipsic she married a fellow called Langevin, at Nancy."

"Who do you say?"

"I say she married a fellow in the Commissariat called Langevin."

"At Nancy?"

"Yes! at Nancy itself."

"How very odd!"

"I should say it was shameful."

"But this young woman—this girl—what was her name?"

"I have told you scores of times—Clementina."

"Clementina what?"

"Clementina Pichon."

"Oh, Heavens! My keys! Where are my keys? I was certain I had put them in my pocket! Clementina Pichon! M. Langevin! No, it is impossible—my head wanders! Oh, my child, bestir yourself; it concerns the happiness of your whole life! Where have you hidden my keys?—ah, here they are!"

Fougas leant forward and whispered in Clementina's ear—

"Is she subject to these attacks? One would imagine the poor old lady had gone mad."

Mdlle. Sambuco had by this time opened a little rosewood desk. At a glance she picked out from the midst of a roll of papers one sheet grown yellow with age.

"Yes! there is no mistake about it," she exclaimed, with a cry of delight. "Marie Clementina Pichon, legitimate daughter of Augustus Pichon, hotel-keeper, Rue des Merlettes, in the town of Nancy, married on the 18th June, 1814, to Joseph Langevin, Military Commissary—that is correct, sir, is it not; dare you say I am mistaken?"

"Hullo! by what chance have my family papers fallen into your hands?"

"Poor Clementina! And you accused her of being untrue—don't you understand that you were reported killed, that she believed herself a widow, that—"

"All right, all right! I forgive her—where is she? I should like to see her, to embrace her, to tell her—"

"She is dead, sir; dead three months after her marriage."

"Oh, the devil!"

"In giving birth to a daughter."

"Who is my daughter—I should have preferred a son, but no matter! Where is she? I should like to see her, to embrace her, to tell her—"

"She, alas! is no more—but I can take you to her grave."

"But how, in the name of fortune, do you happen to know her?"

"Because she married my brother."

"Without my consent? No matter! At any rate, she has left some children?"

"One only."

"A son!—he is my grandson!"

"No; a daughter."

"No matter—she is my granddaughter. I should have preferred a grandson; but where is she? I should like to see her, to embrace her, to tell her—"

"Embrace her if you will—she is called Clementina, after her grandmother, and there she stands."

"Clementina?—this accounts for that strange resemblance! But then I can't marry her. No matter—Clementina, come to my arms—embrace your grandfather!"

The poor child had not been able to understand a single word of this conversation, where events followed each other like tiles falling on a windy day. They had always spoken of M. Langevin as her maternal grandfather, and now it would seem as if her mother had been the daughter of Colonel Fougas.

But from the outset she had realised that she could not marry the Colonel, and that she should soon be the wife of Léon Rénault. It was, therefore, with a feeling of joy and gratitude that she threw herself into the arms of the young old man.

"Ah," said she, "I have loved you from the first, and respected you as a grandfather."

"And I, my dear child, have behaved like an old fool. All men are brutes, and

all women are angels. You guessed, with the delicate penetration of your sex, that you owed me respect, and I—idiot that I am—guessed nothing at all. By Jove, but for the venerable aunt who stands there we should have been in a sad predicament."

"No," replied the aunt, "you would have discovered the truth in looking over the family papers."

"As if I should ever have looked at them! Just fancy, here have I been searching for my heirs in the Department of Meurthe, when all the while I had left my family at Fontainebleau—idiot that I am! but no matter! Clementina, you shall be rich—you shall marry the man you love. Where is he, that fine fellow—

I wish to see him—to embrace him—to tell him—"

"My dear sir, you have just thrown him out of the window."

"I—oh, by the way, yes, that is true—I had quite forgotten that. Happily, he was not hurt, and I will find him and repair my folly. You shall marry each other as soon as you like—the two weddings shall be on the same day. But no—what am I talking about—I am not going to be married: bye-bye, my darling granddaughter. Mdlle. Sambuco, you are a good old aunt—embrace me!"

He ran off to the Rénaults' house, and Bridget, who saw him coming, rushed down to bar his progress.

"Are you not ashamed," said she, "to

behave in this way towards those who restored you to life? Ah, if they only had it to do again, the house would never be turned upside down again for your sake! Poor madame is crying her eyes out, monsieur is tearing his hair, and M. Léon has just sent two officers in search of you. What have you been doing since the morning?"

Fougas twisted her round, and found himself face to face with the engineer, who, hearing angry voices, and seeing the Colonel eager and animated, expected some fresh aggression, and did not wait for the first blow.

A hand-to-hand struggle took place in the passage, amidst Bridget's screams joined to those of M. and Mme. Rénault, who were crying murder.

Léon fought and struggled, and from time to time hit out vigorously on the body of the enemy, till at last he was obliged to give in.

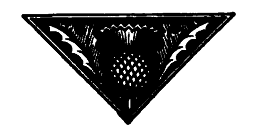
The Colonel ended by throwing him down on the ground, and flooring him, as they say at Toulouse. Then he kissed him on both cheeks and said—

"Ah, you rascal of a boy, you shall listen to me. I am Clementina's grandfather, and I give her to you. You shall marry her to-morrow if you like. Do you hear? Get up, man, and don't give me any more blows; it almost amounts to parricide."

Mdlle. Sambuco arrived in the midst of the general stupefaction. She put some order into Fougas' narrative, which was becoming intricate as to genealogy.

Léon's seconds appeared on the scene; they had not found the enemy at his hotel, and had returned to report progress. They were treated to a spectacle of perfect happiness, and Léon invited them to the wedding.

"Friends," said Fougas, "you will witness Nature undeceived, blessing the chains of love."





CHAPTER VII.

A CLAP OF THUNDER IN A CLEAR BLUE SKY.

"MDLLE. VIRGINIA SAMBUCO has the honour to acquaint you with the marriage of her niece, Mdlle. Clementina Sambuco, to M. Léon Rénault, civil engineer.

"M. and Mme. Rênault have the honour to acquaint you with the marriage of their son, M. Léon Rénault to Mdlle. Clementina Sambuco.

"They invite you to be present at the nuptial benediction, which will be given on the 16th of September, 1859, in the parish

church of St. Maxence, at eleven o'clock precisely."

Fougas insisted that his name should appear in the invitations to the wedding, and they had all the trouble in the world to dissuade him from it. Mme. Rénault discussed the subject with him for two weary hours; she explained to him that in the eyes of the world, as in the eyes of the law, Clementina was M. Langevin's granddaughter; besides which that M. Langevin had behaved very honourably when he legitimised by marriage a child that was not his own, and finally that the publishing of a family secret of such a nature would be a scandal from, as it were, beyond the grave, and would tarnish the memory of poor Clementina Pichon.

The Colonel replied with all the warmth of a young man, and the obstinacy of an old one—

"Nature has her rights, they rank before social conventionalities, and are a thousand times more powerful. The honour of her I called my Eglae, is dearer to me than all the treasures of this world, and if any one dares to impugn it, I am ready to break his head. She only conformed to the customs of a grand epoch in which the uncertainty of life and the continuance of war simplified all formalities. And I do not choose that my great grandchildren, yet to be born, should be ignorant that the blood of Fougas flowed in their veins. Your Langevin is an interloper, who slipped surreptitiously into my family. A com-

missary is almost as bad as a grocer's man—I trample under foot the ashes of Langevin."

The obstinate fellow would not give in to all Mme. Rénault's reasonings, but he allowed himself to be overcome by Clementina's entreaties. The young creole coaxed him with irresistible grace.

"You good grandfather, you dear, handsome grandfather, you dear old baby of a grandfather, we shall have to send you back to school if you are not reasonable."

She would sit by him, and give him little playful taps on the cheek, the Colonel would be sulky at first, but his heart soon melted, and then he would cry like a child.

These little demonstrations did not add

to Léon's happiness, indeed, I may say his pleasure was somewhat diminished by them. He never doubted the love of his darling, nor Fougas' loyalty, and he was even obliged to confess that between a grandfather and granddaughter the closest intimacy is natural, and ought not to offend any one. But the situation was so novel and so uncommon that it required time for him to analyse his sentiments, and forget his sorrows. This grandfather, for whom he had paid twenty-five louis, and the lobe of whose ear he had broken, for whom he had purchased a last resting-place in the cemetery at Fontainebleau; this ancestor, younger than himself, whom he had seen so excited, whom he had thought agreeable, then dangerous and finally insupportable;

this venerable head of a family, who had begun by proposing for Clementina's hand, and ended by throwing his future grandson into the bed of heliotropes, could scarcely be entitled all at once to unmitigated respect or unrestricted affection.

M. and Mme. Rénault preached submission and deference to their son; they represented M. Fougas as a relation for whom allowances should be made.

"A few days' patience," said the good mother; "he will not stay long with us; he is a soldier who would no more be able to live out of the army than a fish out of water."

But at the bottom of their hearts Léon's parents cherished a bitter remembrance of all their griefs and troubles. Fougas had

been the scourge of the family, and the wounds he had made were not to be healed in a single day. Even Bridget owed him a grudge, though she did not say so; she contented herself by heaving deep sighs when she was at Mdlle. Sambuco's, preparing the wedding feast.

"Ah, my poor Celestin," said she to her pupil, "what an odd sort of grandfather we are going to have."

The only person truly at his ease was Fougas himself; he had, so to speak, passed a sponge over all his misdemeanours; he bore no one any malice for any ill that had been done to him. Most paternal in his manner to Clementina, most amiable to M. and Mme. Rénault, he showed Léon the frankest and most cordial friendship.

"My dear fellow," said he, "I have studied you, and I know you. I like you very much, you deserve to be happy, and you will be so; you will soon find that when you bought me for twenty-five louis, you did a good stroke of business. If gratitude were driven out of the world, she would find a last refuge in the heart of Fougas!"

Three days before the marriage, Master Bonnivet informed the family that the Colonel had paid a visit to his office to talk over the marriage settlements. Hardly had he cast his eyes over the roll of stamped paper, than crack went the document in pieces into the fire.

"Mr. Scribe," said he, "be good enough to recommence your work of art. Fougas'

grandchild is not going to marry with only eight thousand francs for her fortune. Nature and affection bestow a million upon her; here it is!"

Thereupon he took out of his pocket a draft upon the bank for a million, strode proudly up and down the office, knocking his heels together, and threw a note for a thousand francs on the desk of the clerks, crying in his loudest tones—

"Children of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners, here is something for you to drink the Emperor's health, and success to the great army."

The Rénault family made an energetic protest against this excessive generosity, and Clementina, primed by her lover, in the presence of Mdlle. Sambuco, had a long

discussion on the subject with her youthful and terrible grandfather. She remarked to him, that being only twenty-four, he would marry some day himself, and that his wealth belonged to his future children.

"I should not wish," said she, "your children to accuse me of robbing them. Keep your million for my little uncles and aunts."

But on this point Fougas would not yield an inch.

"Are you laughing at me?" said he to Clementina, "do you think I should be such a fool as to marry now? I don't intend to live like a Trappist, and at my age, and with my figure, I can still make myself agreeable to the fair sex. Mars does not borrow Hymen's torch to light

him in his promenades with Venus! What is man's object in marrying? to create a family. I am a father in the comparative degree, and in a year or two I shall hope to be so in the superlative—great grandfather! A fine rank that for a trooper of twenty-five! When I am forty-five or fifty I shall be a great great grandfather; at seventy—well the French language has no word to express what I may become! But we will order those chatterers at the Academy to invent one. Are you afraid I shall be destitute in my old age? I have my pay in the first place, and my officers' cross. At the age of Anchises and Nestor I shall have my retiring pension. Add to that the two hundred and fifty thousand francs the King of Prussia gave me, and

you will see that I shall not only have bread, but cheese with it, to the end of my days. Besides, there is the piece of ground in perpetuity which your husband paid for in advance in the cemetery at Fontainebleau. Well, with all that, and my simple tastes, I am not likely to run through my principal."

In spite of themselves, they were obliged to do as he wished, and accept his million. This act of liberality made a great sensation in the town, and the name of Fougas, already so well known in other ways, acquired fresh laurels.

All Fontainebleau wished to be present at Clementina's wedding. People even came from Paris to it. The bride's witnesses were Marshal the Duke of Solferino, and the celebrated Carl Nibor, elected a

few days before Member of the Academy of Science.

Léon modestly kept to the old friends he had chosen from the first, M. Audret, the architect, and M. Bonnivet, the lawyer.

The Mayor donned his new scarf. The Curé addressed the young couple in a touching discourse on the inexhaustible goodness of Providence, who from time to time permits a miracle to be worked in favour of good Christians.

Fougas, who had never performed any of his religious duties since 1801, soaked two pockethandkerchiefs with his tears.

"One often loses sight of what one really most esteems," said he, as he came out of church.

A feast worthy of Pantagruel, presided

over by Mdlle. Virginia Sambuco, in a violet silk dress, quickly followed the ceremony. Twenty-four persons were present at this family gathering, amongst them the new Colonel of the 23rd, and M. du Marnet, who had nearly recovered from his wounds.

Fougas lifted his napkin with a certain anxiety. He had hoped the Marshal would have brought him his brevet of General of Brigade. His speaking countenance betrayed a lively disappointment, when he saw his plate contained nothing!

The Duke of Solferino, who had just seated himself in the place of honour, perceived his change of countenance, and said aloud—

"Don't be impatient, old comrade; I know what you are looking for. It was not

my fault that this *fête* still wants something to complete our happiness. The Minister of War was absent when I went to see him; they told me at the office that there is a hitch about your promotion, only a question of form, however, and that you would receive a letter from the Cabinet within the next twenty-four hours."

"The devil take all writers," cried Fougas. "They have everything necessary from the certificate of my birth to the copy of my Colonel's brevet. You will see, it is a certificate of vaccination or some such worthless paper, they are making all this fuss about."

"Come, come, have patience, young man! You have plenty of time to wait; you are not like me. Had it not been for

the Italian campaign, which enabled me to rescue my Marshal's *bâton*, they would have sent me packing like an old horse, under the pretext that I was sixty-five years old. You are not twenty-five, and you are on the point of becoming a General of Brigade. The Emperor made you that promise in my presence. In three or four years you will have the gold stars, if ill luck does not come in the way. After that there only needs you should obtain a command and a lucky campaign to become Marshal of France and a Senator, which is not to be despised."

"Yes," replied Fougas, "I shall come to that, not only because I am the youngest officer of my rank in the service, that I have gone through the whole of the great

war, and carried out my master's lessons in Bellona's battlefields; but, above all, because fate has marked me for her own. Why have bullets spared me in more than twenty battles? Why have I traversed oceans of bronze and steel without ever having received even a single scratch? It is that I am born under a lucky star like him! His was a grand star, that is certain, but it set at St. Helena, while mine still shines on the horizon. If Dr. Nibor has restored me to life by a few drops of hot water, it must have been that my destiny was unfulfilled. If the will of the French people has re-established the Imperial dynasty, doubtless it is to give me the opportunity of showing my courage in the conquest of Europe, which he was

about to undertake! Long live the Emperor—and I! I shall be a prince or a duke before ten years are out, and even—why not?—I shall try to be present at the distribution of crowns! In that case I shall adopt Clementina's eldest son; we will call him Peter Victor II., and he shall succeed me on the throne as Louis XV. succeeded his grandfather, Louis XIV."

As he ended this tirade, an official entered the room, asked for Colonel Fougas, and put into his hand a despatch from the War Office.

"By Jove!" cried the Marshal, "it would be a good joke if your promotion should arrive at the end of such an harangue. For a certainty we shall all have to bow before your star; the Magi

would be nothing in comparison with ourselves."

"Read it yourself, Marshal," said he, handing over the large sheet of paper. "Or rather, no! I have always looked death bravely in the face—I won't turn away from this portentous document, even should it kill me."

"COLONEL,—In preparing the Imperial decree which was to give you the rank of General of Brigade, I find an insurmountable obstacle in your certificate of birth. From this document, it appears you were born in 1789, and that you are just now seventy years of age. Now, the limit for a colonel is fixed at sixty, sixty-two for generals of brigade, and sixty-five for

generals of division; and in this case I feel myself obliged to put you on the reserve list, with the rank of colonel. I know, sir, how little your apparent age warrants this proceeding, and I sincerely regret that France should thus be deprived of the services of a man of your merit and your vigour. It is true that an exception in your favour would provoke no ill-feeling in the army; on the contrary, it would be met with universal sympathy. But the law is immutable, and the Emperor himself can neither violate nor elude it. The impossibility which results is so absolute that if, in your ardour to serve your country, you should consent to give up your epaulets and commence a new career, your services could not be accepted by any

regiment of the army. It is fortunate, sir, that the Emperor's Government has been able to provide you with the means of subsistence by obtaining from H.R.H the Regent of Prussia the indemnity which was your due, for there is no civil appointment which can be given to a man of seventy even by favour. You will object very justly that the laws and rules date from an epoch when experiments in resuscitation had not as yet produced any favourable results. But the law is made for the many, and takes no note of exceptions. No doubt, if the cases of resuscitation occurred in sufficient numbers, it might then be modified.

"Your obedient Servant,

"&c., &c."

A dead silence followed the reading of this letter. The official still stood there, like a soldier at attention, waiting for Fougas' receipt.

The Colonel asked for a pen and ink, signed the paper, and, in a voice full of suppressed emotion, said—

"You are a happy fellow! You are not forbidden to serve your country! Well," continued he, addressing the Marshal, "What do you say to this?"

"What would you have me say, now, old fellow; it is beyond me. There is no disputing the law, it is absolute. It was very stupid of us not to have thought of all this before. But who the deuce, seeing a strong, active young fellow like you, would ever have remembered the age for retiring?"

The two Colonels confessed that this objection had never occurred to them, but, having been raised, they had nothing to say to it. Neither one nor the other would d are to enlist Fougas as a private, notwithstanding his physical strength and his twenty-four years.

"Then," shouted Fougas, "let them kill me. I cannot turn to weighing sugar, or planting cabbages! It was as a soldier I first entered life, a soldier I must remain, or die! What else can I do or become? Go into foreign service? never! Moreau's fate is still before my eyes. Oh, Fortune! what have I done to thee that thou hast cast me down so low at the very moment I was expecting to be raised so high?"

Clementina tried to console him by saying a few kind words.

"You shall always remain with us," said she, "we will find you a nice little wife, and you shall bring up your children together. In your leisure moments you shall write the history of your life, and relate all the grand deeds you have done. You lack nothing—youth, health, fortune, family; everything that constitutes the happiness of mankind is yours; why then should you be unhappy?"

Léon and his parents spoke in the same terms. Everything was forgotten in presence of so real a sorrow and such deep dejection.

By degrees the Colonel recovered himself and even sang at dessert a little song which he had improvised for the occasion.

They all greatly applauded the old-fashioned poetry, but poor Fougas smiled sadly, spoke very little, and never became in the least elevated. He took part in the festivities of the day, but was no longer the brilliant companion who had hitherto always been the life and soul of society.

The Marshal took him aside during the evening, and said—

"Of what are you thinking?"

"I am thinking of those veterans who were lucky enough to fall at Waterloo with their faces to the enemy. That old German fellow who preserved me for the benefit of posterity rendered me very poor service. Mark me, Leblanc, a man ought to live in his own times! later on it is too late!"

"Come, Fougas, no nonsense; there is

no need to despair! I shall go to the Emperor to-morrow; something will be done; they will find there are not so many men like you in France that they can afford to cast you aside."

"Thanks; you are an old, true friend. There were five hundred thousand like you in 1812, now there only remain two, or rather, I should say, one and a half."

Towards ten o'clock, M. Rollon, M. du Marnet and Fougas escorted the Marshal to the railway station. The Colonel embraced his old comrade, and promised to be reasonable.

The train left, and the three Colonels returned on foot to the town. While passing the house of M. Rollon, Fougas said to his successor—

"You are not hospitable to-day. You have never offered us a glass of that fine Andaye brandy."

"I thought you did not seem inclined to drink," replied Colonel Rollon. "You took nothing in your coffee, nor after it—but pray come in."

"The air has made me feel thirsty."

"Ah, that is a good sign."

He clinked his glass against theirs in an absent sort of manner, and scarcely wet his lips with the liquid. But he stopped for some time gazing at the colours, fondly caressing the staff, unfurling the silk, and counting the various holes therein that balls and bullets had made; but not one tear did he shed.

"Decidedly," said he, "the brandy has

burnt my throat. I am only half a man to-day. Good-night, gentlemen."

"Wait, we will return with you."

"Many thanks, but it is only two steps to my hotel."

"Never mind. But what an idea to stay at an hotel when you have two houses here at your disposal."

"True, but to-morrow I leave."

The next morning, about eleven o'clock, Léon, as happy as a king, was completing his toilet, when a telegram was brought to him.

He opened it without being aware that it was addressed to Colonel Fougas, and gave a cry of joy. This is the laconic message which caused him so much delight:

"To Colonel Fougas—Fontainebleau.

"Just left Emperor's study. You made General of Brigade, by foreign title, waiting something better later on. Legislative Council will modify law.

"LEBLANC."

Léon dressed himself, flew to the Hôtel du Cadran-Bleu, rushed up to the Colonel's room, and found him—dead in his bed.

It was said in Fontainebleau, that M. Nibor made a *post mortem* examination, and discovered some serious complaint caused by the dessication. Some people maintained that Fougas had committed suicide. This much is certain, that M. Bonnivet received

by post a kind of will drawn up in these terms—

"I bequeath my heart to my country, my remembrance to Nature, my example to the army, my hatred to perfidious Albion, a thousand crowns to Bridget, and two thousand francs to the 23rd Regiment. Long live the Emperor all the same!

"FOUGAS."

Resuscitated on the 17th of August, between three and four o'clock in the morning, he died on the 17th of the following month. His second life had lasted barely thirty-one days.

We must do him the justice to say he had made good use of his time! He lies

in the piece of ground Léon Rénault had originally purchased for him.

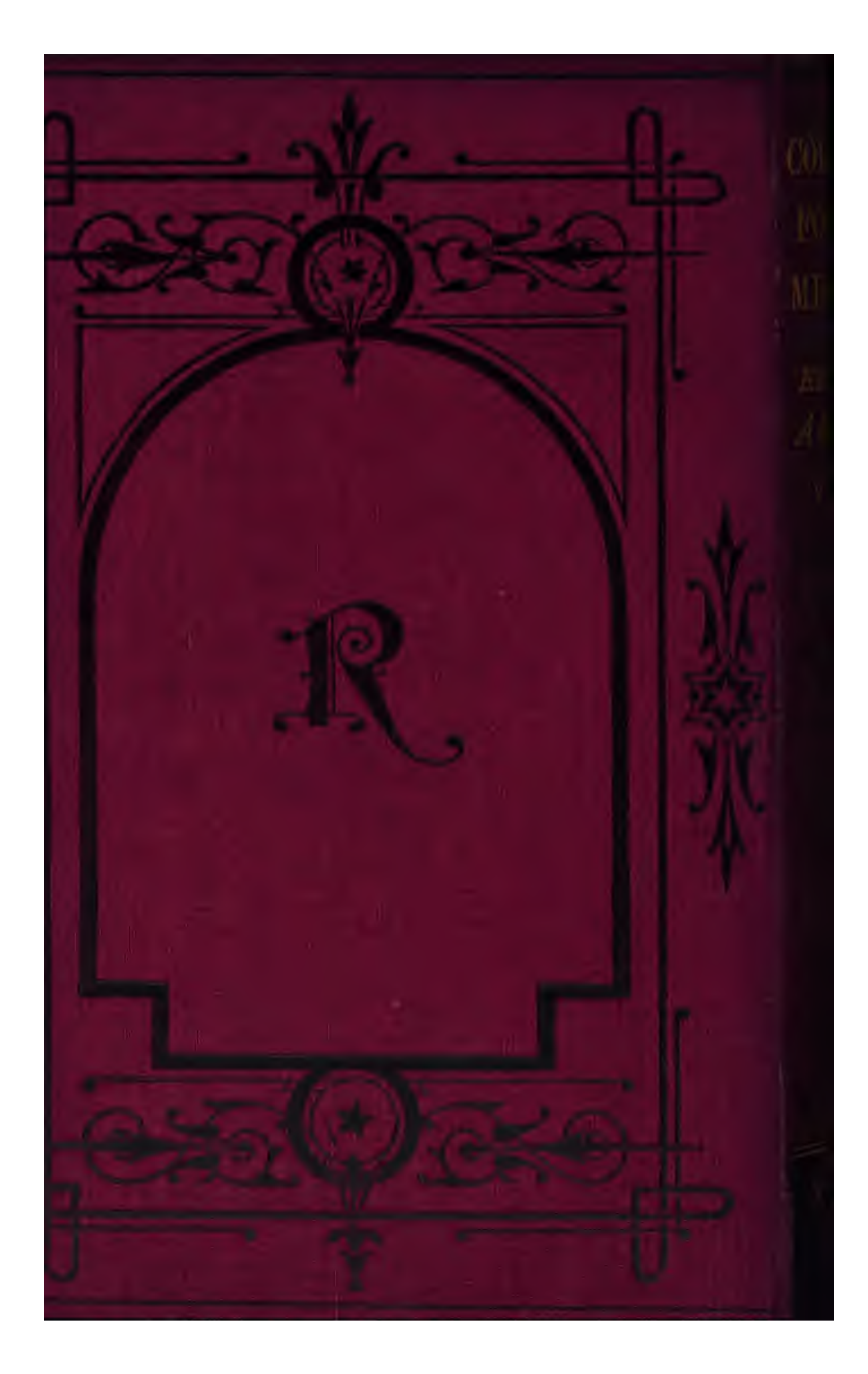
His granddaughter Clementina only left off her mourning for him a few years ago, and is now a loved and happy wife.

THE END.

Printed by REMINGTON & Co., 5, Arundel Street, Strand, W.C.






R